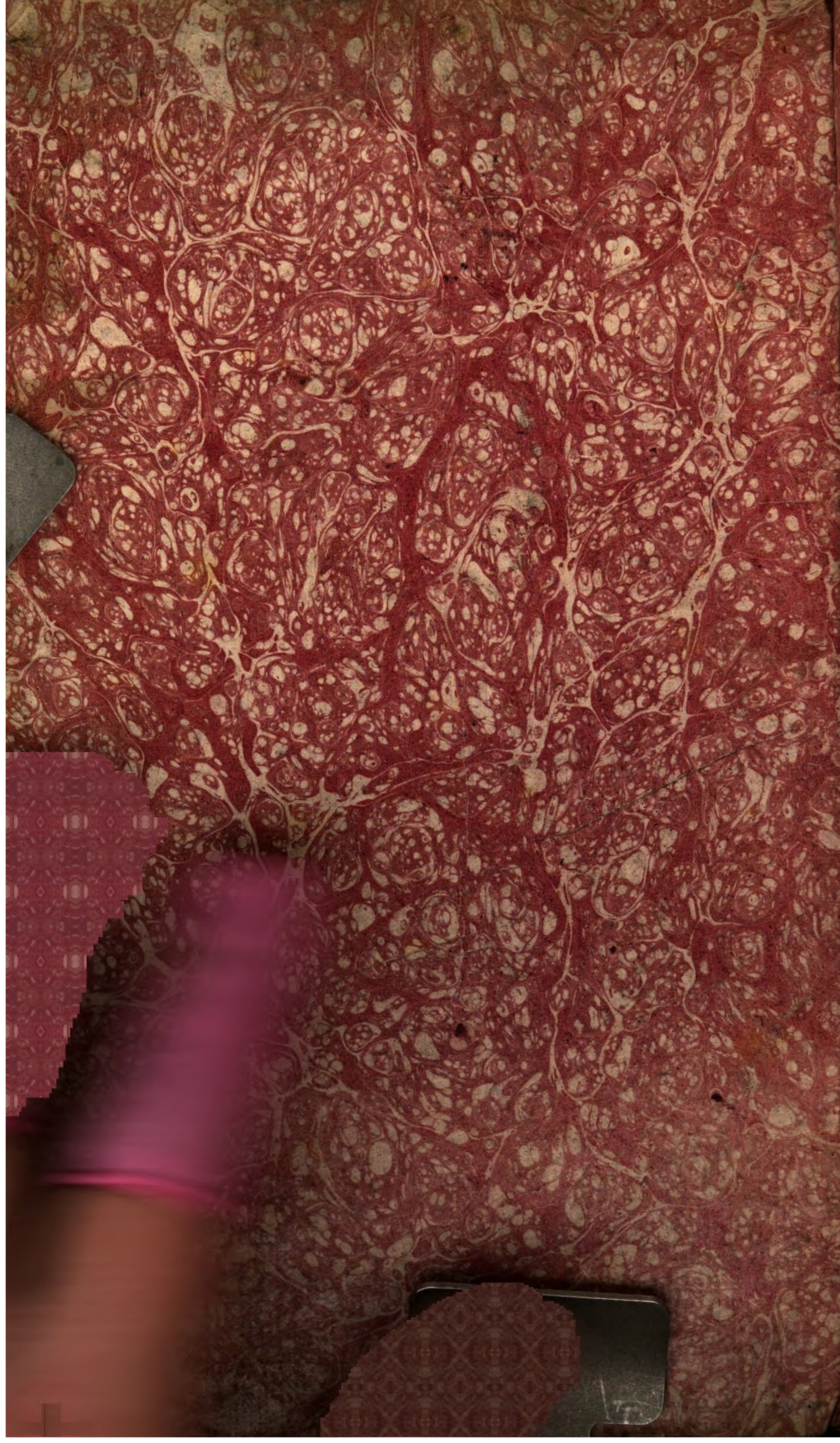
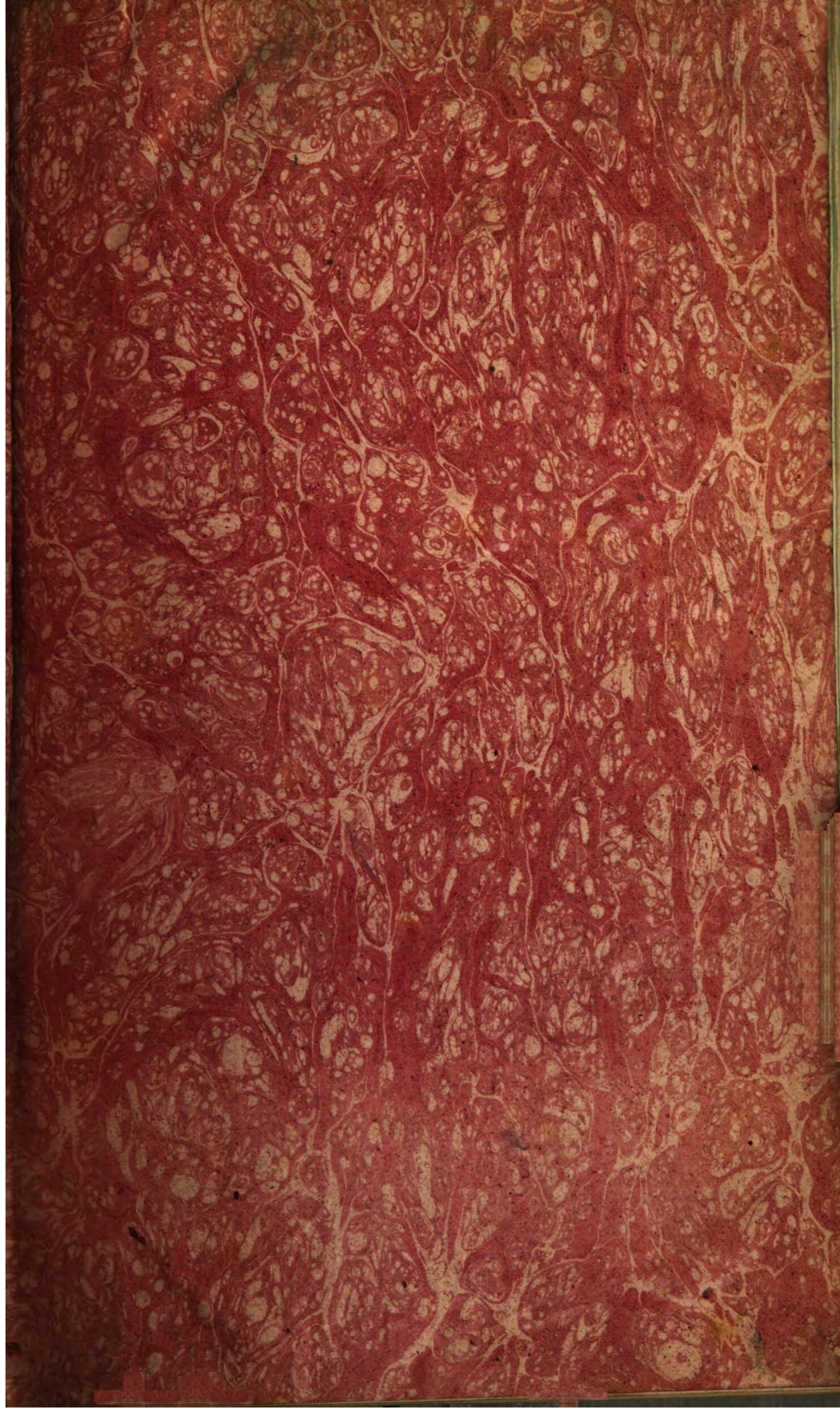








Theol. Par. 1050. 6.

Blom. 1477^d

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON
IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
BY JOHN HENRY DODD

SEVERAL

OF THE
MEMBERS
OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY
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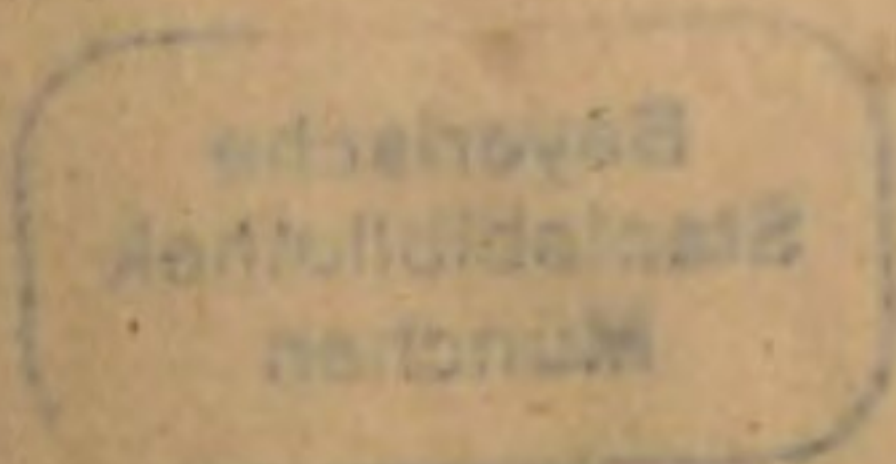
GREGORY SHARPE, L.L.D.

Late Master of the TEMPLE, Chaplain in
Ordinary to his MAJESTY, and Fellow
of the ROYAL and ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETIES.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, in the STRAND.

M DCC LXXII.



S E R M O N S

O N

V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

G R E G O R Y S H A R P E, I. L. D.

Late Master of the Temple, Chaplain in
Ordinary to his MAJESTY, and Fellow
of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. CADDELL, in the Strand.

M D C C L X X I I

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

EDMUND

LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE,

In Testimony of that Veneration which is due
to an amiable and respectable Character,

THESE DISCOURSES

are inscribed by

his LORDSHIP'S

obliged and most obedient

humble Servant,

London,
June 1st, 1772.

J. ROBERTSON.

[a]

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

EDMUND

Lord Bishop of CARLISLE

In testimony of the Veneration which is due
to an amiable and respectable Character

THESE DISCOURSES

are inscribed by

his Lordship's

obliged and most obedient

humble Servant,

London,

June 18, 1773.

J. Robertson.

[a]

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S*SIXTEEN of these Sermons are published by the Author's desire. Twelve of them were preached before their Majesties, in the Chapel-royal at St. James's; but were not originally written for that Purpose. The third, fourth, and eleventh were preached on three several Fast-days, in 1757, 1758, and 1759. The seventeenth and eighteenth were published soon after they were preached, but being now very scarce are reprinted.*

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B O O K S

PUBLISHED BY THE LATE

D R. S H A R P E.

THE Editor of these Discourses persuades himself, that the following list of books, which have been published by the late Dr. Sharpe, will be acceptable to the reader; that it will, in some measure, supply the want of Biographical Memoirs, and afford an incontestable evidence of the great abilities and application of this learned writer.

I. A Review of the Controversy about the Meaning of DEMONIACS in the New Testament; in which are considered Mr. HUTCHINSON's Sermon at Oxford about the usual Interpretation of ΔΑΙΜΟΝΕΣ, Mr. CHURCH's Reply to the Further Enquiry, Mr. Twells' Answer to the Further Enquiry, and a Tract intitled, "Some Thoughts on the Miracles of Jesus, by

[a 3]

" an

Books published by the late Dr. SHARPE.

“ an impartial Hand ;” to which is added an Appendix, in answer to Mr. SWINTON’s critical Dissertation concerning the words ΔΑΙΜΩΝ and ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ. 1738. 8vo. Roberts.

II. A Defence of the late Dr. SAMUEL CLARKE, against the Reply of Sieur LEWIS PHILIP THUMMIG, in Favour of Mr. LEIBNITZ, with THAT REPLY in FRENCH and ENGLISH; to which is added an original Letter from Mr. LEIBNITZ, containing miscellaneous Observations on various Subjects in Divinity, History, and Politics, with proper Remarks on the Perversion of several Protestant Princes to the Popish Superstition and Idolatry. 1744. 8vo. Knapton.

III. Two Dissertations : I. Upon the Origin, Construction, Division, and Relation of Languages. II. Upon the original Powers of Letters; wherein is proved from the Analogy of Alphabets, and the Proportion

Books published by the late Dr. SHARPE.

tion of Letters, that the HEBREW ought to be read without Points; to which is added, in seven letters, a new and easy Method of learning the HEBREW Language; and a new HEBREW Lexicon of all the primitive Words in HEBREW, and many derived Words in that and other Languages, with their various Significations in HEBREW and ENGLISH, free from the MASORETIC Points; with an alphabetical Table or Index of all the ENGLISH and other Words in the Lexicon, and a proper Reference to the original HEBREW. Second Edition enlarged. 1751. 8vo. Millan.

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IX. The Want of Univerfality no Objection to the Chriftian Religion: being the Substance of a Discourse preached at the Temple Church, Nov. 10, 1765. 8vo. Longman.

X. Syntagma Differtationum, quas olim auctor doctiffimus Thomas Hyde, S. T. P. feperatim edidit. Accefferunt nonnulla ejusdem opufcula hactenus inedita; necnon de ejus vitâ fcriptisq[ue] προλεγόμενα; cum Appendice de linguâ Sinenfi, aliifque linguis Orientalibus, unâ cum quamplurimis tabulis æneis, quibus earum characteres exhibentur. 1767. 2 Vol. 4to. T. Payne.

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XIV. Eighteen Sermons on various Subjects. 1772. 8vo. Cadell.

THE

T H E
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Preached in the Chapel Royal, at St.
James's, June 27, 1762.

2 CORINTH. v. 17.

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:
old things are past away; behold, all things
are become new.* Page 1

S E R M O N II.

Preached at St. James's, June 12, 1763.

JOHN iii. 18, 19.

*He that believeth on him is not condemned,
but he that believeth not is condemned
already, because he hath not believed in the
name of the only begotten son of God.
And this is the condemnation, that light
is come into the world, and men loved
darkness rather than light, because their
deeds were evil.* 17

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Preached at St. James's, June 17, 1764.

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abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth
forth much fruit.* 73

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Preached at St. James's, July 14, 1765.

2 TIM. iii. 4.

*Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of
God.* 91

* The author had the thanks of his Majesty for this sermon by the bishop of Winchester, clerk of the closet.

S E R-

C O N T E N T S.

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Preached at St. James's, June 1, 1766.

LUKE XV. 31, 32.

*And he said unto him, son, thou art ever
with me; and all that I have is thine.*

*It was meet that we should make merry and
be glad: for this thy brother was dead,
and is alive again, and was lost, and is
found.* IIII

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Preached at St. James's, June 22, 1766.

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Preached in February 1759.

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of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind
on earth shall be bound in heaven; and
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*He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake
it, and gave unto them, saying, this is
my body which is given for you: this do
in*

C O N T E N T S.

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S E R M O N I.

2 CORINTH. V. 17.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.

IN this world all is mutable: time is progressive, and all human affairs change with it. The greatest empires have their period of dissolution; and the proudest monuments, though erected to the eternal memory of men, fall into ruin. Earthquakes, inundations, and war make sad devastation; and the return of barbarous days, when science, arts, and manners droop, is almost as fatal and destructive as any of the forest plagues. “ In the cities
“ of the mountains, in the cities of the
“ vale, and in the cities of the south, and
A “ in

“ in the land of Benjamin, and in the
 “ places about Jerusalem, and in the cities
 “ of Judah, shall the flocks pass again
 “ under the hands of him that telleth
 “ them *.” Battles have been fought and
 cities built where men now plough with
 oxen. Of so short a duration are all human
 fabrics; and yet some survive by many ages
 the hands that raised them.

A little time levels all men, and they
 return to indistinguishable dust; and yet
 many remain whilst more than twice the
 number that ever lived at one time are
 subdued by death.

Man is not a long time stationary. His
 seasons may be compared with those of the
 revolving year. Infancy is spring, youth
 summer, manhood autumn, and old age
 life's winter. In his first stage he is the
 care and delight of others; tender as the

first vernal shoots, and like them easily nipped in the bud. But if he endures till the summer of life, he is exposed to the storms of that season; for then all is not sunshine and flowers. Arrived to the state of manhood he is called forth to peaceful labour, social arts and sciences, or the loud din of war. And in the last stage he withers and bends till he drops into his grave. Here ends mortality, but not the mind of man. The body often comes to perfection, “is of the earth*,” and will soon return to it again. The mind is from above, spiritual and indiscerpible, and therefore incorruptible and immortal. It has not the full exertion or complete enjoyment of its powers and faculties in this state, in which passion and appetite so frequently prevail over reason and religion.

What human minds have been able to perform may be determined from the productions and discoveries of some men,

* 1 Cor. xv. 47.

which prove their spirit not to be confined, like that of other animals, to this earth. The preservation of themselves and the continuance of their species is all that brutes concern themselves about; whereas the mind of man extends its views beyond this system, and beyond the grave. Men are distinguished by the great privilege of knowing God and their dependence upon him; and, therefore, they are to worship him, and to look forwards towards immortality. That great Being of beings hath given us capacities that look for immortality; and we have powers to contemplate his works and to understand them in part; from whence we may take leave to conclude, that he intends us for farther advancement in knowlege, a more extensive and complete understanding of all those things at least, after which, in this short state of being, we are led by natural powers to inquire. A state of being this too short to bear any just proportion to the faculties of the mind; and so perplexed and full of disap-

disappointments and affliction to really good men, that it is not intelligible upon any other principles than those of revelation; I say of revelation, because that which is now called natural religion was borrowed from revealed religion.

Since, therefore, we have so much reason to expect another state hereafter, and feel and own ourselves accountable for our conduct and behaviour to him who placed us here, we should take care, above all other things, to maintain a good conscience, that we may have reasonable grounds to hope for everlasting happiness. “ We know (says “ the apostle) that if our earthly house of “ this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a “ building of God, an house not made with “ hands, eternal in the heavens.—Not that “ we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, “ that mortality might be swallowed up of “ life.—For we must all appear before the “ judgment-seat of Christ, that every one “ may receive the things done in his body,

“ according to that he hath done, whether
 “ it be good or bad *.” Christ, who is to
 be our judge, is our saviour and redeemer,
 the author of eternal life. And, therefore,
 as he died for all, says the same apostle in
 the same place, “ they which live should
 “ not henceforth live unto themselves, but
 “ unto him which died for them, and rose
 “ again.—Wherefore henceforth know we
 “ no man after the flesh. Therefore if any
 “ man be in Christ, he is a new creature:
 “ old things are past away; behold, all
 “ things are become new.” All human
 distinctions, all party prejudices, are to yield
 to this consideration, “ that all things are
 “ of God, who hath reconciled us to him-
 “ self by Jesus Christ †;” hath caused us
 (the Gentiles) to return from idolatry and
 superstition to the worship of the true God;
 and hath made one fold of Jews and Gen-
 tiles, under one shepherd, who is the Lord
 from Heaven. If therefore any man be in
 Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.

* 2 Cor. v. 1. 4. 10.

† Ver. 15, 16, 17, 18.

The Jews called a Profelyte a new creature; the Christian, therefore, whose sins have been remitted, and who is the subject of a prince, whose kingdom is not of this world, may well be called a new creature by St. Paul. “The Gentiles who had been of
 “the uncircumcision, aliens from the com-
 “monwealth of Israel, without hope, and
 “without God in the world*, were in Christ
 “Jesus created unto good works †,” that
 they might, from the time of their conversion or visitation, “walk in newness of
 “life.” They were to put off the old man,
 or their former conversation, which was corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and to
 assume or put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true
 holiness; that is, “they were to put away
 “lying and to speak truth, every man to
 “his neighbour, as being members one of
 “another. The sun was not to go down
 “upon their wrath, nor were they to give

* Ephesians ii. 12.

† Ver. 10.

“ place to the evil one. They were to steal
“ no more,” but to be industrious, that
they might honestly supply their own
wants, “ and have to give to him that
“ needed. No corrupt communication was
“ to proceed out of their mouth. All
“ bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and
“ clamour, and evil-speaking, with all
“ malice, were to be removed far from
“ them; and they were to be kind to one
“ another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
“ another, even as God, through Christ,
“ had forgiven them.” This is St. Paul’s
own exposition of what is called by him a
creation unto righteousness. The society or
congregation of Christians was a new
world to the Gentiles, and therefore their
admission into it is not improperly termed
a creation to newness of life. It is neither
unnatural nor inelegant to call him a new
creature, who is so intirely changed as
from a course of gross impiety and wick-
edness to become good, and virtuous, and
holy.

“ Old

S E R M O N I.

“ Old things are past away.” The old things that were to pass away from the Gentiles were their sins and impieties, the whole body of sin; from the Jews, their ritual law and ceremonies which kept them distinct and separate from all other people; but Christ was to “ break down “ the middle wall of partition *,” and in him all nations were to be united, all men to become one people.

Let us consider first the old things or ancient practices of the Gentiles.

Their notions of the Deity were very far from being just and honorable. Instead of one God they worshipped many gods and many lords. They filled heaven with their heroes and tyrants and concubines, and consecrated the most impure of human vices. Scarce was any thing so wicked or indecent as not to make a part of their religious worship. Murder was sanctified under the

* Ephesians ii. 14.

notion of appeasing their enraged deities, and all manner of voluptuousness and debauchery committed in honor of those divinities, who were supposed to preside over such abominable practices; for they had a divinity for every vice, and almost every quality or affection of the human heart and human frame. Such as were the divinities, such were they who worshipped them. The men were no better than their gods; every appetite was indulged, every passion gratified, and all manner of wickedness perpetrated under the sanction of superstition; practices which civil laws, instituted for the good order of society, could not but condemn, though they could not suppress. Hence it is that the apostle represents the Gentiles as enemies to God, aliens and strangers, children of wrath by nature, without God in the world, without hope, “fitting in darkness and the shadow of death.” But Christ was “a light to lighten the Gentiles;” and by his holy apostles they were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God.

God. The Jews, who were a peculiar people, could not be the children of wrath by nature, nor, possessing a revelation from heaven, could they be said to sit in darkness: they were in covenant with God, and therefore not to be considered as his enemies. But then they were often guilty of abominable sins and wickedness, and were separated from the rest of mankind by a peculiar establishment. These things were grown old, and the time was almost come, when they were all to pass away. It had all along been the intention of Almighty God in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ Jesus. The difference between Jew and Gentile was some time or other to cease, “and the sheep of the
“other fold to be brought and made to
“hear the voice of their Saviour, that
“there might be but one fold and one
“shepherd*.” The causes of separation,

* St. John x. 15.

therefore, were to be taken away, and a new revelation of God's will published to mankind, that all might hear and all turn unto him. What was peculiar to the Jews was to be removed or made universal. Such ceremonies as were local and appropriated to one place, as to the city or temple of Jerusalem, would of course be abrogated; and circumcision, and such other rites as kept up the distinction between Jew and Gentile, could no longer be continued, when all distinction and difference was to be taken away, and all men to become brethren and fellow servants, having one God and father, and one lord and master, who is the mediator Christ Jesus.

The Messiah was to be a king, with power to make and repeal laws; and learned Jews have declared, that when he comes, all sacrifices, but the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, will be at an end; then sin and death will be swallowed up in victory; all feasts, except the feast of purim
or

or lots, and the day of expiation, are to be abolished, and fasting and mourning turned into joy, as in times of peace. The Nasiræans are to drink wine, and the distinction of meats into clean and unclean taken away. There are to be no more prophets, nor any profelytes made by circumcision, but both Jew and Gentile to be one. As the old Jewish authors declare, that these things are to happen when the Messiah comes, what reason can there be to doubt that the Messiah came long since in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, when the old things actually passed away, and all the signs, and dates, and tokens, given by the prophets to denote the time when the Messiah was to come, were accomplished, which, together with the declension of the Jewish state and church, the silence of Jewish prophets, and the known departure of the sceptre from Judah, as had many ages since been foretold, could only be determined and brought to pass by the foreknowledge and good provi-

providence of God, in whose hands alone is the disposal of times and seasons? Such evidence as this seems irresistible; and has this advantage besides, that it requires no tedious deductions, nor any great labour to obtain it. It depends upon the declarations of the prophets, the concessions of the Jews, and the true history of that period of time when Jesus came into the world. Then “old things passed away; and, behold, all things are become new.” The æra of the restoration of man is a new period, and as great and worthy to be celebrated as creation. It was not more an instance of divine power to make man, than of divine goodness to redeem him. Man soon after his formation departed from his innocence, and “through sin death came into the world;” for “the wages of sin is death.” All men have sinned; all men must die. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” If there had been no law, men could not have offended against it; but the law must be obeyed,

obeyed, or sentence will be passed. The law knows no mitigation, mercy flows from the sovereign. Christ is our heavenly king, and as such he has the glorious prerogative of shewing mercy to delinquents. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins*.” He hath erected a kingdom of righteousness, into which all men are invited, all have admission through faith and repentance; and if they shew themselves dutiful and obedient subjects in this short state of discipline and probation, he who is their prince is their judge, and at his hands will they receive “crowns of glory that fade not away†.”

These were the glad tidings, the new things that were published by the Lord Jesus and his disciples. And when we

* Acts v. 31.

† 1 Peter v. 4.

consider their use and importance in promoting true religion, and virtue, and goodness, and everlasting happiness, it is to be expected, that all things, which are not perfectly consistent with them, should be made to pass away, and that from henceforth we should walk in newness of life:
“ giving no offence in any thing—but
“ in all things approving ourselves—in
“ much patience—by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by
“ the holy ghost, by love unfeigned, by
“ the word of truth, the power of God,
“ and the armour of righteousness *.”

* 2 Cor. vi. 3, 4. 6, 7.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

JOHN iii. 18, 19.

He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

TRUE religion and virtue were strangely defaced before the appearance of Christ in the world. Vices of every sort were in practice to the most monstrous degree; and the gods of the Heathens were represented as more vicious than their votaries. Some indeed there were, friends to truth and virtue, who

B asserted

asserted many just opinions of the supreme God, and proposed to men right rules of action in a variety of cases: but these were very few in number, had no sufficient authority to enforce their doctrines, such as they were, and seem not to have been certain of some of the most useful truths they delivered, and in many more opinions were greatly mistaken.

Human sacrifices, or the slaughter of men in cold blood, to avert the rage of their imaginary deities; the love of false glory, which induced the more powerful to subdue and enslave all nations less skilled in arts of war than themselves; and the delight many received from the most cruel and inhuman spectacles, had thrown the world into an extreme moral disorder.

Such as are the notions men conceive of the Governor of the universe, such will their actions naturally be; for to please him, and to act in conformity to his acknowledged attributes, is a general rule
to

to all religious beings. If therefore the Heathens imagined, that their deities were guilty of almost every vice, were rude, intemperate, revengeful, subject to every passion and infirmity, except that they were immortal, in common with the most profligate of their creatures, their notions of religion and virtue must have been very false and pernicious, most unworthy of heaven and highly injurious to men.

The abuses of religion have been many and great, and the old observation, that it had often produced impieties and abominable immoralities*, is confirmed by the superstitious notions men have formerly entertained of their deities, and by the customs, which, otherwise as unaccountable as impious and vain, have been introduced into the world in consequence of them. But then these notions and practices should no more be charged upon religion

* ————— Sæpius olim
Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.

LUCRET. i. 83.

than crimes upon the laws that were made to prevent them. Superstition is the real source of these errors, which differs as much from true religion, as anarchy or rebellion from government.

The difference between true religion and the abuse of it, which is superstition, may easily be known by the appearances they both make. The one has hope, and love, and charity, and humility, and modesty, and reason, in her train; the other is surrounded with fire, stakes, and every instrument of torture, attended by pride, and ignorance, and the furies.

If men had no religion they would not be without superstition; and since truth is uniform, and error infinitely various, it is not very astonishing that errors in religion, as well as in philosophy, have been more universal than the truth.

Man is properly distinguished from all other animals as he is a religious being.
If

If the Creator had not expected worship and adoration from his creature man, he would not have indued him with the capacities he certainly has to discourse of God and his attributes from his works, but would have left us, like the beasts that perish, under the influence of such instincts and appetites, as might be necessary to preserve and continue the species.

The capacity he has to discover his dependence on a supreme Director, to whom his conscience tells him he is accountable for his whole conduct in life, and from whom he must therefore expect reward or punishment, shews that he is a religious being.

If men were not religious beings, they would no more dispute concerning religion than other animals. Capacities could not be given to no purpose or without design; and to suppose the Deity to enable man to look towards heaven and address his

Maker, and yet excuse him, if he should entirely disregard this capacity and honorable privilege of his nature, or rank in the creation, is a most unaccountable absurdity.

We behold the structure of this globe, we consider it as the work of his hands, who, in the language of Job, is said “to stretch out the north over the empty place, and to hang the earth upon nothing*.” We are not satisfied with a view of the orb we inhabit, nor of the system to which it belongs: we extend our thoughts far beyond them; we roam into the boundless regions of space with a thirst after knowledge that is insatiable; and as neither the short space of time allotted us here on earth, nor the utmost exertion of human powers, are sufficient, in this mortal state, to comprehend what by our natures we are qualified and therefore designed to inquire into, it is not to be doubted, but

* Job xxvi. 7.

that our great and good Parent will remove us, when we depart from this planet, into those regions, from whence we may be enabled to make farther and more perfect discoveries of his works ; and complete that knowlege both of him and them, which, to use the words of St. Paul, we may be said here in this present state to view as
“ through a glass darkly ; but then face to
“ face : now we know in part, but then
“ we shall know even as we also are
“ known *.”

This is such an argument for a future state, as must satisfy every serious and diligent enquirer, who will not think that he was formed for knowlege, which he shall never be permitted to acquire ; that he is bound to search and is never to be satisfied ; to know, but to know in part only ; to have expectations and to be disappointed in them ; to feel and own himself accountable for all his actions, and yet never to

* I Cor. xiii. 12.

account for the whole of his conduct ; to have all other animals put under his command, to use them as he pleases, and to give no account of the discharge of this trust to him who placed him in a state of dominion over them ; all this is utterly unimaginable.

Though it is true that we have capacities which look for immortality, and are by nature qualified for the performance of religious duties ; it is also true, that we can acquire but very inadequate notions of the Deity, or of a future state, without the assistance of revelation. Man, left to himself, will contrive a variety of superstitions, as is sufficiently evident from the history of human beings, in every place where revelation has not been received. But as man is a religious being, and never was nor can be governed without religion, and yet whatever he has contrived for himself without the help of God has been exceedingly superstitious, it is to be presumed,
that

that the Deity may have granted him such information and assistance, as is necessary for him. We should therefore enquire after a revelation from heaven, and examine what is proposed to us as such with all candor, and serious application, and earnest desire of being instructed from above in those divine matters, of which we can have but a very imperfect knowledge without revelation.

But if light is come into the world and men prefer darkness to it, because their deeds are evil, nothing can be more just than the condemnation of such men.

It is true, the sentence is pronounced against him that believeth not, but the cause or reason of the sentence is, that his deeds were evil. It is not faith without works that will save sinners: they may believe, but if their faith is fruitless, it will rather aggravate than excuse their faults. The barren tree that bears no fruit is fit only to be cut down and cast into the
fire;

fire ; and a believer without repentance and obedience is a very bad man. “ Not every
“ one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,
“ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,
“ but he that doth the will of my Father
“ which is in heaven *.” The condition
on which men received the Gospel was
remission of sins ; but then they were to
repent and conform to the laws of the
Gospel. That their former sins were no
more to be remembered or imputed to
them was an act of grace and favor. He
that believed therefore, that is, confided on
Christ, and became faithful in deeds as
well as words and propositions, is not con-
demned, but he that believeth not, he that
refuseth to come to the light, because he
will not depart from his wicked ways, is
already condemned. Such a one remains
in his sins, and is therefore under the sen-
tence of guilt. But though the sins of
men on their conversion were all pardoned,
it is not to be supposed, that men are

* Mat. vii. 21.

allowed to continue in transgression, and that the pardon is always to extend to them, because they believe and will not obey. On the contrary, Christians of all men have the least excuse for their vices, having had more favor shewn them, more information, more motives given them to continue steadfast in the performance of good works, as well as in their assent to words.

The example of Christ should influence the conduct of Christians, and they should follow the pattern of good works set before them, and by their own good example encourage others to do the same, that God may be glorified thereby, may be extolled for his great loving-kindness to men, by all those who see the light of the Gospel shining forth in the conduct of believers; who are required by their Lord and Master to “let their light so shine before men, “that they may see their good works, “and glorify their Father which is in “heaven*.”

* Mat. v. 16.

The character of our Lord and the superior excellence of his precepts are surely sufficient to engage men to read the scriptures, and the more attentively they are read, the firmer will be our faith. The unity of design, the connexion and harmony of the several parts of these writings, the justness and wisdom of them all, become manifest by being attentively considered; and as those difficulties, which may appear on the first view, are removed by closer application, such sublimity of reasoning will shew itself, as must give great strength to the other arguments in favor of their divine origin.

We hear of objections to miracles and prophecy, but of none to practical christianity; and yet if men were really to live up to the rules of the Gospel, we should seldom hear of any objections at all. For it is not likely the evidences would be so often disputed, if the things to be proved by them were never denied.

He that considers miracles and prophecy as impossible, should at least account for the origin of man without them ; otherwise it will be supposed, that they might be as necessary at the restoration, as the creation of our species. But is there any miracle contended for that is greater than creation ? And if every thing was not done for the first formed of men, when he could do nothing for himself, he must have perished on the very spot, on which he was produced. Nor could he well have been trusted with himself, till he was informed of the consequences of his actions, and this information is equal to prophecy. But without extending our thoughts so far back as to the origin of man, there are many prophecies in the New Testament, concerning the state of the church in latter times, so very explicit, that they, who are guilty of these corruptions, have thought proper to shut up the Bible and forbid it to be read ;
“ commanding to abstain from certain
“ meats, forbidding to marry, worshipping
“ of

“ of saints or angels, vainly intruding into
“ what they have not seen ; making mer-
“ chandise of the souls and bodies of
“ men” by purgatory and reliques. These
superstitions and frauds were not known in
the christian world, till some hundred years
after the death of Christ ; and yet they are
foretold as corruptions of the latter times :
and whether they are yet revealed, let him
judge, who hath eyes to see, or ears to
hear.

The case of infidelity is very different
now from what it was in the first ages of
christianity. To deny the miracles recorded
in Scripture is a new thing. The most
ancient enemies of our holy religion ad-
mitted them ; and it is now at this great
distance too late to deny them. They who
lived nearest to the times when these
things were done had no evidence against
them, and only disputed whether they were
performed by divine power or by magic.
If we look into the old writings of the
Jews,

Jews, we shall find in them several circumstances relating to the history of Jesus and his disciples. They mention a miracle done in the name of Jesus, not taken notice of in the Gospel, and an offer of St. James to a man just expiring, to cure him, but he refused to be healed in the name of Jesus*.

Is it to be imagined, that of all the enemies to christianity the Jews should bear their testimony to the miracles of our Lord and his disciples, if they were not real? no, surely they would not have owned this power, if it had not been too manifest to be disowned. And if the old Jews admitted these extraordinary works, and the Heathens, who in early times opposed christianity, did not deny them, is this a time to dispute them? Have we any new evidence to produce against them, or the religion supported by them? no, in point of fact the distance is too great; and the old adversary Celsus is as much

* See Argument in Defence of Christianity, p. 46, 47, &c.

beyond the modern infidel in point of argument as in distance of time. Christianity has almost extinguished paganism; and the present state and continuance of the Jews is a real miracle, foretold by the writers of the Old and New Scriptures, which are therefore confirmed by it. And if we examine the Mohammedan, we shall hear him confess “Jesus to be the son of Mary—
“ordained for a sign unto men and a mercy
“from God.” Though he doubts the miracles of his own prophet, he believes those of Christ, and many more done by him than are recorded in the Gospels. Turks and Persians expect the second coming of our Lord, and think that all religions will then be one. We know it is the design of God,
“in the dispensation of the fulness of times
“to gather together in one all things in
“Christ:” and the great increase of Christianity, the downfall of Paganism, the situation of the Jews, and concessions of Mohammedans render this event exceedingly probable.

Upon

What nature has been able to produce, without the assistance of revelation, we may see from the several kinds of Paganism, which prevailed before the coming of Christ. As to what is now called the religion of nature, it is manifestly derived from the christian religion, or at least owes its greatest and best improvements to it. And as they both coincide, and the evidence for both are too strong to be denied, it becomes every man to act in conformity to the rules they prescribe, that when he is to account for the use of the talents and powers, with which he has been entrusted, the judge may say unto him, “ well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy
“ of thy Lord *.”

* Mat. xxv. 21.

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* Mat. xxv. 21.

S E R M O N III.

P S A L M lxxv. 7.

*God is the judge; he putteth down one, and
setteth up another.*

TH E world and all that therein is, the earth with its inhabitants, the starry hosts of heaven, all the vast orbs and countless systems of the universe; they, and every speck and atom in them, are the works of God; they are his agents, his servants, acting under his laws, objects of his eye, and subjects of his will.—God is the creator: God is also the judge. “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing*. He hath garnished the hea-

* Job xxvi. 7.

“ vens. His eyes are upon the ways
 “ of man and he seeth all his goings.
 “ There is no darkness, nor shadow of
 “ death, where the workers of iniquity
 “ may hide themselves. He shall break
 “ in pieces mighty men, and set others in
 “ their stead *. He putteth down one and
 “ setteth up another.”

He is known by his works. His power,
 his wisdom, and his goodness are conspi-
 cuous in every part of the creation. “ That
 “ which may be known of God is mani-
 “ fest, for God hath shewed it. The invisible
 “ things of him from the creation of the
 “ world are clearly seen, being understood
 “ by the things that are made, even his
 “ eternal power and godhead: so that they
 “ are without excuse, who glorify him not
 “ as God, neither are thankful, but become
 “ vain in their imaginations, and have their
 “ foolish hearts darkened †.”

* Job xxxiv, 21, 22, 24.

† Rom. i. 19, 20, 21.

It would be much easier to suppose the largest edifice, the proudest cities, built without hands, supported without inhabitants, or, being peopled, governed without laws, than to conceive the universe created without a cause, or subsisting without a governor. As well might the most artificial and pleasant gardens be imagined to rise spontaneously from rude chaos or confusion, and maintain their form and beauty without art or culture; as well might the loftiest vessel, that ever moved upon great waters produce itself, put forth its sails and take them in, avoid rocks and shoals, contend with wind, and wave, and storms, nor lose its course amidst the infinite and trackless paths of the sea, self-formed, self-moved. Whoever beholds these objects, sees design in them, admires their contrivance, the capacity of him who built them, and of him who governs and directs them.

Is this true of the works of man only? is it not more evident in the works of God? Can human productions force us to acknowledge skill in the mortal artificer, and shall we be blind to the glorious productions of Almighty God? Can we give honor to one another, and deny the glory that is due to him who made us? “He that planted
“the ear, shall he not hear? he that
“formed the eye, shall he not see? he
“that teacheth man knowlege, shall he
“not know *?”

Man can do no more than exert the powers he receives from God upon objects that are given him: he works upon materials already made: he may range them as he pleases, but he can produce nothing new beyond a change of form or shape. The least insect, or the smallest flower we can see, are productions infinitely more amazing than all, the mimic art of man could ever raise.

* Psalm xciv. 9, 10.

Let us for a moment withdraw our attention from our own works, and consider the workmanship of God in the fabric of man. How wonderful his make ! The admirable contrivance of every part of him for the purposes of his life, preservation, and happiness, the suitableness of all his natural desires to their respective objects, the tender and public affections, which constitute him a social being, and, above all, that divine power which declares him to be a religious being ! His chief excellency, the noblest prerogative of man, is to know and to acknowledge God, to discover and discourse of his Creator, to consider him as his father and his judge, to whom he is to account for the use of all his powers and faculties.

That we continue to exist is owing to the good providence of God : and since created beings have no principle of existence in themselves, their preservation and continuance is as signal a proof of his presence and power as is creation. What-

ever notions men may entertain of themselves and of one another, it is certain, that if the great Being of beings, who made them, was perfectly indifferent about them, regardless of them and their actions, as infinitely beneath his notice, he would not have created them, he would not continue or preserve them. Whatever he has thought worthy of creation and preservation cannot be supposed unworthy of his regard. And though, on many accounts, we have reason to humble ourselves before God, and be astonished at his goodness and mercy, yet as he hath been graciously pleased to make himself known unto us in this world, and qualified us for entertaining hopes of better things in a world to come; however insignificant we may be in any other light, as religious beings, with immortal minds, we may safely infer, that he who is our God, our father, our king, and our judge, will not totally disregard the works of his hands; but having given us laws under eternal sanctions, promised us his favor if obedient, and threatened

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us with his just indignation if transgressors, he will do honor to his laws, by distinguishing the proper objects of his grace and mercy from those, who have incurred his displeasure. Let it be considered, that the Lord who made us is our judge, that he hath put his law into our hearts, that we are moral and religious beings, accountable for our conduct, and therefore objects of rewards and punishments.

To God we make our most solemn appeals, and it is presumed, that, in all societies, under this awful sanction, men will declare the truth. Religion yields security to men : they are governed by religion : it is the foundation of laws ; and without it there is no virtue, truth, or honor.

No people have ever yet been governed without religion. A belief in God as the Lord and governor of the world, who will recompense all men according to their works, is so necessary, that societies neither
have

have nor can subsist without it. The hopes and fears, the sacred discipline religion inspires, would not have been made necessary to the good government of men, if they had no real foundation. The virtuous, therefore, can have no reason to think their expectations shall be cut off, nor the wicked that they shall for ever escape punishment.

This is equally true of men in a collective body, as of individuals. States and kingdoms have their rise, progress, decline, and dissolution; they are born, and live, and die as do their constituents. In power and duration they greatly differ. A single man has little strength, and is of short continuance, his family may survive him, and the period of a nation exceeds that of many families. If they are good and virtuous, God will bless them, and they shall prosper; if they are corrupt, and impious, and dissolute, he will destroy them. In vain will they have recourse to their own imaginary strength, when the Lord is against them.

them. When the wickedness of a people has made them ripe for destruction, the enemy they have despised may be permitted to overthrow them : “ for the battle is not
“ always to the strong *.” “ There is no
“ king that can be saved by the multitude
“ of an host ; neither is any mighty man
“ delivered by much strength. Behold the
“ eye of the Lord is upon them that fear
“ him, and upon them that put their trust
“ in his mercy †.” When the children of Israel were dutiful and good, the Lord was on their side, and fought their battles for them, and they overcame their enemies with ease, though greatly superior to them in numbers, as in the war against the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah : but when they were impious and wicked, in vain had they recourse to arms, the Lord was then against them, as in the latter days of old Eli, and again under Rehoboam, when “ he and all Israel with him
“ had forsaken the law of the Lord, and

* Eccl. ix. 11.

† Psalm xxxiii. 15. 17.

“ transf-

“transgressed against him * :” he and his people were saved, by a speedy repentance, from the destroying armies of the great Egyptian, though despoiled of their treasures, and justly reproached for their effeminacy.

The history of the Jews is a continued series of such events, as prove the great concern God has for true religion, and for them who strictly adhere to it. That right and worthy notions of the Creator, his worship, and our duties, might be preserved in the world, one nation was favoured with symbols of the presence of God, and with the appearance of an angel or messenger from the Lord, and with his servants, the prophets, till the time drew near, when the great messenger of the covenant, the Lord from heaven, was to appear and unite all men to himself, and publish the glad tidings of salvation, the grace and mercy,

* 2 Chron. xii. 1, 2.

which the father, through him, had determined to bestow upon his indigent and fallen creature, man. And, contrary to whatever happened to other nations, the people of the Jews, though often in captivity, and dispersed for ages over the whole face of the earth, still subsist; and when all other ancient people have long since been lost by conquest, or subdued by time, with almost every trace of their civil and religious rites, these men alone retain their most ancient laws and customs, and are distinguished by many particularities from other men, with whom they live in such numbers, though widely scattered, that could they all meet they would once more become a mighty nation. “To them were committed the
“oracles of God,” which they carry with them wherever they go, and prove by their appearance, which is, at this time, as extraordinary, as any circumstance whatever in their sacred records. The conduct of Providence, with regard to this people, is as remarkable, on account of their continuance

tinuance and a strict adherence to their law, under remote and long captivities and dispersions, as in preserving them at home in Palestine, and providing for their return from the captivity in Babylon.—Thus we see, that by this people idolatry is every where condemned, and right notions of God and his law preserved in the world.

If we enquire after other useful sciences, we shall find they took their origin in the East, and principally in Egypt, from situation and necessity, which quickly gave birth to every profitable art; and then the free states of Greece were raised to bring them to perfection, which they accomplished in a few generations; and after this appeared the military genius of the Romans, who, with their arms, not only subdued but civilized the world. Arts and arms went together, and mankind received at once all that Egypt had brought forth, and Greece had nursed for Rome to carry round the world. Soon after this period, when man-

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kind

kind became united, as it were, under one government, in the age most distinguished for letters and improvements, in the empire of the Romans, “it came to pass in those days,” says St. Luke, “that there went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” About this time the Saviour of the world was born; and the Christian religion soon became the religion of the world; and satan, or idolatry, fell like lightening from his ancient seat.

Who can reflect on these great events, and doubt the providence of God? are not his power, and wisdom, and goodness, and mercy manifest in these glorious dispensations? But let us pause a while and ask what is become of all these vast empires? where is proud Babylon? where the boasted power, and wisdom, and learning of the old Egyptians? where the holy city of Jerusalem? the free states of Greece? and the mighty empire of Rome? Alas! they have all long since been destroyed; and Rome, the

the idolatrous city of Rome, which rose upon the ruins of the world, subsists now upon its own; and, like its books of the ancient sibyls, grows more valuable the less it contains.

States and empires, as well as men, become great in proportion to their industry and labor, and œconomy, and fidelity, and justice, and fortitude, and other virtues. Whilst they are good they will be great. God himself will take care of them. But when they forsake the principles upon which they were raised, and deviate from the virtuous examples of their ancestors; when they neglect the public worship of God; when they are impious, and corrupt, and dissolute, they will be delivered up to their enemies. They may subsist, like the prodigal, for a time upon what they derive from their fathers, but, when that is gone, their vices, though they should have no other adversary, will destroy them.

The

The principal foundation and support of public virtue is public piety or religion. When we depart from God, from the due observance of his worship and his laws, we are undone. If we honor God, we shall take delight in his service, the performance of all our duties. To pretend to religion without virtue is hypocrisy. The fruits of faith are virtuous actions.

Man, considered by himself, is to direct his actions so as to promote his own happiness and the design of God in creating him, to obey the precepts of religion and the dictates of his conscience, and to control and balance his appetites and passions, that they may neither destroy the peace of his mind, nor the health of his body. As connected with others, he is to consider their interest as his own, and act for them as for himself.

In societies, many new relations, and consequently many new duties arise, the im-

D

portance

portance of which will bear some proportion to the size of the community, and, therefore, the good citizen prefers the public to private interest.

As society cannot subsist without union, discord is one of its most deadly foes. In free states, the balance will rarely be preserved so exactly on the level, but jealousy, and the contention of the different powers united in rule, will raise and depress the scales a little, which on a sense of danger will soon settle to an equal poize.

“ Behold how good and pleasant it is for
“ brethren to dwell together in unity *.”
Unanimity gives rapidity, and strength, and confidence to every enterprize.

Happy would it be, if to the rest of our public virtues, we could be persuaded to add equanimity : for it is too true, that we are

* Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

easily elated, and as easily depressed. A little success will sometimes make those men vain, whom a slight loss had sunk beneath themselves. It is the characteristic of a great and noble spirit to bear the different vicissitudes of fortune, prosperity, as well as adversity, with an equal mind: this, religion, and policy, and true fortitude, and public security, and public happiness all inspire and persuade.

Let us therefore depend upon God and his providence, and by a faithful and diligent discharge of our religious and civil duties endeavour to make our God, our king, and every good being our friends, the guardians of our lives, our liberties, and fortunes.

early elected, and as early dissolved. A little
after its dissolution it was re-elected, and
from 1791 to 1795 it had three sessions. It
was then dissolved. It is the chief office of a
state, and no one is to be admitted to it
unless he is a citizen, and is of the age of
twenty-one years, and is of the free and
natural birth of the United States. It is
the highest and most honorable office in the
land, and is the chief office of a state.

It is a trust reposed upon God and
his providence, and by a faithful and
gentle discharge of our religious and civil
duties endeavor to make our God, our
king, and every good thing our Father,
the guardian of our lives, our liberties,
and fortunes, and of every interest.

Who is that who is to be our Father,
our King, and every good thing our Father,
the guardian of our lives, our liberties,
and fortunes, and of every interest.

S E R M O N IV.

PHILIP. ii. 12.

*Work out your own salvation with fear
and trembling.*

IF men are to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, as in the awful and immediate presence of Almighty God, they must take care to “provide things honest” in the sight of him, who “is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity*.”

He not only regards his creatures with a watchful and a tender eye, but co-operates with them for their happiness. He leads

* Habbak. i. 13.

them by his providence, his spirit, and his word. He sent his only-begotten son into the world to save us, to “ guide our feet “ into the way of peace *,” to instruct us in all our duties, and by every persuasion, every motive present and everlasting, to encourage us in the discharge of them. Having, therefore, favoured us with laws supported by proper sanctions, furnished us with sufficient powers, incited us by every motive to obedience, given us all the means and all the encouragement necessary to enable us to perform what he has required of us, and, moreover, put us under the conduct of his son as our shepherd and our guide, he is properly said to “ work in us “ both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

If salvation is not attainable without works ; if men are influenced and directed from above ; if the law, the rule of life, is from God, engraven in their hearts, and

* Luke i. 79.

they have the assistance of the spirit in the inspired writings, they are not to place an absolute assurance in any thing whatever, without works; they are not to be hearers of the word only, but to be doers of it, that they may be justified. And having such aids, if they are not better, they are certainly more inexcusable than all other men.

Man is born to labor; and want of industry and goodness is the very worst of wants. No tribe of animals is left by nature so helpless as the human race. But then we have faculties and powers, if we exert them as we may and ought, not only to support and protect ourselves, but even to manifest a superiority above the rest of the creation. It is the law of nature that none should be idle; and it is the law of God that men should be employed only in good works. If he is graciously pleased, through Christ, to accept of an imperfect obedience, such goodness should rather stimulate us to be more active, and diligent, and dutiful, than

induce us to be negligent and idle, and so to become both weak and wicked.

If it should be suggested, that the more wicked men are, the more merciful it is in God to forgive them, it should also be considered that sincere penitents are the only objects of mercy; and though it is better to repent than to die in our sins, it is better never to have offended at all. If human nature is so frail, that in many things all will offend, and nothing short of infinite perfection can be absolutely pure and perfect, for finite beings, merely because they are finite, must be imperfect, it is nevertheless our duty to offend in as few things as possible.

No greater reproach or infamy can be charged upon any sect or society, than to assert that it encourages idleness and profligacy; and to suppose the Christian, the purest of all religions, to absolve men from the laws of God, and of nature, and their country,

country, to allow them to be lazy, or workers of iniquity, if they work at all, and to be faved by the frantic effects of an over-heated imagination, without any good works, is a gross calumny that may be attended with very bad consequences.

Our blessed Lord and Saviour requires his disciples to be devout and harmless, charitable and good: he commands them, as their law-giver, to “be perfect, as their Father “who is in heaven is perfect*,” in love, and mercy, and every good work; and as their judge, he declares he will finally acquit or condemn them, according to the deeds they have done, whether they be good or evil. They who are blessed of the Father, “and as such are to inherit the kingdom “prepared for them from the beginning of “the world||,” are they who feed the poor, and clothe the naked, visit the sick, receive the stranger, and relieve the distressed. On the other hand, they whose hearts are steeled

* Mat. v. 48.

|| Chap. xxv. 34.

against all sensibility of the calamities of other men, and are too selfish to act for the good and advantage of any other object besides themselves, “ shall go away into “ everlasting punishment.”

The disciples and apostles of Jesus follow the dictates of their great master, and recommend to all their followers purity of manners, good works, and holiness, without which no one can see the Lord. If we are not saved for our works, can we hope to be saved without them? Life is a gift, much more eternal life! it was offered once as a reward of perfect innocence. Man fell, and had his recompence, the wages of sin. We are all mortal; we may repent, but repentance is not innocence. The promise is renewed in Christ, the prince of life; immortality is brought to light by him: but then the condition is obedience to the law of the gospel, which is righteous as the law of God. We are saved by faith, but then faith implies fidelity and obedience, with

with a view to the reward, which is eternal life. If we are to be faithful and obedient that we may inherit everlasting happiness, we must work, and are therefore compared to laborers in a vineyard, and the tree bearing fruit.

It is sufficient that our blessed Lord has required us to act as well as to believe: he has shewn, that good works are necessary to our salvation; and that a barren faith is no better than a barren tree. If we “believe” in God, and that he is a rewarder of “them who diligently seek him,” such faith as this should lead us to the performance of all those things, which may shew, that we seek him with diligence continually, and wait with patience for the promised reward. Right actions are the natural production of right principles; and, therefore, a reasonable, well-grounded, active faith will produce its proper fruits, which are good works.

St.

St. Paul calls salvation our own work, by exhorting the Philippians to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is so far our own, that we are to work for it; we are to labor that we may obtain it; and we are to be actuated by such religious awe and reverence, as to dread the consequences of not doing our duty, and to tremble for them. Whilst he was with the Philippians, he commends them for the excellency of their behaviour, as having always obeyed, but much more in his absence, being in the presence of God himself: in other words, having always obeyed, when the apostle was with them, they should not be less but rather more diligent and dutiful in his absence, as considering themselves in the presence of Almighty God. They were, therefore, to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.” They were to be influenced by the dread of offending him, “who is able to destroy both soul and
“ body

“ body * :” but then they were to fear him only, and not those “ who have power to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” They were to regard nothing so terrible as sin, which they were to avoid more than death, or any other evil whatever. Such a terror as this is consistent with the greatest courage ; and, indeed, the most virtuous have ever been the bravest. They have no reason to dread vengeance from him, whom they have never wilfully offended ; they are safe under the protection of that Providence, which here or hereafter will recompence men according to their works. Their virtue gives them a confidence not attainable without it ; they are always ready to depart when called upon to account for their conduct ; nor are they dismayed at the dark and awful passage of death, as knowing it leads to everlasting happiness. Sin makes men cowards. They, who most frequently commit evil, have

• Matt. x. 28.

most

most reason to apprehend evil: they are intitled to no other reward. Death must be terrible to those who greatly lose by it; and therefore they avoid it; which the good man never does, whenever called upon to hazard his life; for the loss to him is gain, is honor, and glory, and immortality.

The fear of offending God will support men in the continual practice of holiness and virtue, which again will produce love; and they together “boldness in the day of judgment;” the consequence of that “love, which is said to cast out fear, because fear hath torment*.”

If the good and pious are to be bold, even in the day of temptation, how much bolder ought they to be, when the contest is, whether they shall die gloriously, or live with infamy? When they have every reason, every motive, that truth and justice, religion, liberty, and the love of their

* 1 John iv. 17, 18.

country can inspire, to animate their courage, and to warm their hearts? No force can withstand or subdue the bravery of men, actuated by such glorious principles, if, at the same time, they are conscious of their own integrity and virtue. But if their vices are predominant, they are subdued before they engage, and have already lost the liberty they should contend for, by being the slaves of sin, that is, the very worst and meanest of slaves.

The man who is constrained by superior force to drudge for others, and to exert his strength, as the tyrant who has subdued him shall command, is to be pitied: but he, who is so foolish and absurd, as to forge fetters for himself, and suppress every manly and virtuous quality within him, that he may become the slave of his own appetites and passions, will be despised. He shews himself unable to maintain his superiority over subordinate passive powers within himself, and will, therefore, be but
a bad

a bad defender of the rights and liberties of others. He will have no hearty inclination to contend earnestly for the privileges of another, who has so easily surrendered up his own. There can be no dependence upon such a man, that he will be a faithful friend to others, who has been found so notorious an enemy to himself. Hence, therefore, the necessity of virtue to the well-being of society. For if men protect themselves against their own vices, they will not fear any adversary whatever; they will know the value of truth and virtue, religion and liberty; they will know that nothing on this side heaven is comparable to them, and that life is not worth preserving without them. The virtuous man is actuated by many just causes, and many dear relations, each more dear to him than life, to all which, the wicked wretch is utterly insensible. Can a slave to sin contend for liberty upon principle? no, for licentiousness he may, but not for that species of freedom, which alone is to be valued, as
it

it gives encouragement and support to virtue, which grows up and declines with it. Men can be no longer free than they are virtuous. Whilst virtue remains, freedom continues with it : when virtue is upon the departure, freedom will not stay behind. The connexions formed by a wicked man are with his own vices, or with such as practise them. The tender and affectionate relations of parents, husbands, children, friends, seldom agitate their breasts, or, if they do, it is to reproach them for having neglected the duties which result from them.

So that whether we consider men as religious, or social beings ; as in the presence of God, and accountable to him for all their actions ; as members of society, and bound to conform to its rules ; or, as forming the lesser societies of families and friends, for whose good they should be ever vigilant and active, and for whose preservation they should be ready to sacrifice their lives ; if they have neither religious nor virtuous dispositions ;

E

positions; are neither awed by the fear of God, which dispels all other fear; nor animated by a love of liberty, and the love of their country, which is dearer than themselves to all good citizens, nor yet warmed by those generous sentiments, which friendly and family connexions, and the more public love of one another as countrymen, naturally inspire, they are no more worthy to be preserved by others, than they are in a condition to serve others, or to save themselves. With these virtues they have nothing to fear, without them nothing to hope. The eye “ of the Lord is upon
“ them that fear him, and upon them that
“ put their trust in his mercy *.”

When it had pleased God to deliver his servant David “ out of the hand of all his
“ enemies, and out of the hand of Saul,” this extraordinary deliverance is imputed to his fidelity and uprightness: “ the Lord
“ rewarded me according to my righteous-

* Psalm xxxiii. 17.

“nefs, according to the cleanness of my
“hands hath he recompensed me : for I
“have kept the ways of the Lord, and
“have not wickedly departed from my
“God : for all his judgments were before
“me, and as for his statutes I did not de-
“part from them. I was also upright be-
“fore him, and have kept myself from
“mine iniquity : therefore the Lord hath
“recompensed me according to my righte-
“ousness *.”

Every man, every collective body of men, who will behave in such a manner, as to intitle themselves to the same plea, will meet with the same recompence. If men will work, not the work of avarice and a spurious ambition, and other public and private vices, but the work of salvation ; if they will faithfully discharge the several duties, arising from their several relations to God, the king, their country, and their friends ; if they are pious, benevolent, and

* 2 Samuel xxii. 21—25.

good, honest in all their dealings, and faithful in performing their promises; if they have no sinister views, are neither fraudulent nor rapacious; if they love not themselves alone, but “love their neighbours as themselves;” if they are industrious and active; if they do all the good, and prevent all the evil in their power; if they are temperate and chaste; if humble and dutiful, modest and obliging; if they never do any thing they may have reason to be ashamed of when done, nor omit what piety, reason, and benevolence prompt them to do; if they behave as in the presence of Almighty God, and dare make their appeal to him for the integrity of their hearts, there is nothing they may not reasonably expect from his goodness, nothing they should fear from the perfidy or malice of their enemies. A few such men would have saved even Sodom from destruction. Nothing, therefore, can be so unreasonable as despair, nothing so necessary as virtue. Would all be righteous, would all obey the laws of God,
human

human laws would be useless. Government arises from the necessity of protecting the weak against the strong, the good against the bad, of enforcing obedience to the original laws of nature, and of providing against all human wants and infirmities. Few laws are requisite, where men are disposed to do what is right, from principle rather than compulsion, but no laws will be sufficient, where men in general are without principle, and unite only to do mischief.

It is in vain to complain of government or of laws, when men are determined not to be influenced by them, were they ever so good. It is only transferring the blame of their own misconduct to those, who would not have it in their power to be very bad, if they had not bad subjects to work upon. Let every man do his duty, and it is not possible the whole should be otherwise than excellent. But if we call upon others to be good, when we are not good ourselves; if we cry out for reformation,

and will not reform; if we recommend what is right by talk only, and never by practice, the effect will be adequate to the cause, and nothing done, because words are not deeds. Let us mend ourselves first, and then set about the good work of reclaiming others, not in vain-glory and ostentation, but purity of life and manners. If few at first, the number will become great by example, and efficacious by union.

The advice is general: “work out your own salvation.” Every man, the poorest amongst us, is concerned, and has his share in this good work. The whole society is made up of individuals; and if one man withdraws his hand or heart, another may do the same, and the society be dissolved. It is the uniting together of good men that preserves society and gives it power and strength. Things very weak, if taken separate and alone, acquire great force by being united. This was well known to the royal Psalmist, who piously exclaims,
2 “behold,

“ behold, how good and how pleasant it is
 “ for brethren to live together in unity*!”

“ If then there be any consolation in
 “ Christ, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any
 “ bowels and mercies, be ye like-minded,
 “ having the same love, of one soul, mind-
 “ ing that one thing†. Let nothing be
 “ done through strife or vain-glory; but in
 “ lowliness of mind let each esteem other
 “ better than themselves. Look not every
 “ man on his own things, but every man
 “ also on the things of others. Let this
 “ mind be in you, which was also in
 “ Christ Jesus.” “ Do all things without
 “ murmurings and disputings; that ye
 “ may be blameless and harmless, the sons
 “ of God, without rebuke, in the midst
 “ of a crooked and perverse generation,
 “ among whom ye shine as lights in the
 “ world‡.”

* Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

† Συμφυχοι, το εν φρονουντες.

‡ Phil. ii. 1—5. 14, 15.

S E R M O N . IV.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to live together in unity."

"If then there be any consolation in
Christ, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any

love and peace, be ye like minded,

having the same love, of one soul, mind,

and thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

in the Lord, in the same mind, and

thought, that ye may be united by

the bond of peace, and be like minded,

S E R M O N V.

J O H N xii. 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

OUR blessed Saviour seems in this, as well as in several other places, to allude to that famous prediction concerning the Messiah, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; where he is called “the Lamb,” and is said to have been “reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning me,” says Jesus, have an end*.” where also it is said, he shall see his seed and prolong his days.” This seed is the produce of the

* St. Luke xxii. 37.

“ corn

“ corn of wheat, which by dying brought
 “ forth much fruit.” That our Saviour
 here speaks of himself is evident from the
 preceding verse, wherein he says, “ the
 “ hour is come, that the son of man
 “ should be glorified :” and in the thirty-
 second verse, “ I, if I be lifted up from
 “ the earth, will draw all men unto me ;”
 and in another place, “ he that soweth
 “ the good *seed* is the Son of Man : the
 “ good *seed* are the children of the king-
 “ dom *.”

These expressions admirably well ex-
 plain the use and meaning of the same word
 in Isaiah.

In the verse immediately following the
 text, the Saviour of the world thus addresses
 all his followers : “ he that loveth his life
 “ shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life
 “ in this world shall keep it unto life eter-
 “ nal. If any man serve me, let him follow

* Matt. xiii. 37, 38.

“ me, and where I am, there shall also
“ my servant be. If any man serve me,
“ him will my Father honor*.”

However difficult it may be to account for a resurrection from the dead, we may give good assistance to the mind, in conceiving the possibility of such an event, from a variety of circumstances in the natural world.

When we reflect on the several changes which happen to animated, as well as to inanimate things in nature; when we know, that there are insects, which appear with a new body, and with new and different powers, a long time after the former have been laid aside; when we behold the trees, that shed their beauties when summer is gone, resume them upon the return of summer again, why should we deny a second spring to men? There can be nothing more mysterious or strange in the

* Matt. xiii. 25, 26.

resurrection to another world, than there is in our being born into this. We see the one indeed, and faith, if we have but a little faith, will enable us to see the other.

When we behold the seed committed to the earth, the grain rotting, and afterwards the herbage rising, and, ripened by the sun, bringing on the yellow harvest, how natural would it be to apply this, by analogy, to good men departed! the seed on which, in due time, the sun of righteousness will shine, and by his divine influence raise, saying to the reapers, in the time of harvest, “gather ye together first
“the tares and bind them in bundles to
“burn them; but gather the wheat into
“my barn. He that soweth the good seed
“is the son of man. The field is the
“world; the good seed are the children of
“the kingdom; but the tares are the
“children of the wicked one; the enemy
“that sowed them is the devil; the harvest
“is the end of the world, and the reapers
“are

“ are the angels. As therefore the tares
“ are gathered and burnt in the fire; so
“ shall it be in the end of this world.
“ The son of man shall send forth his
“ angels, and they shall gather out of his
“ kingdom all things that offend, and
“ them which do iniquity; and shall cast
“ them into a furnace of fire: there shall
“ be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then
“ shall the righteous shine forth, as the
“ sun, in the kingdom of their Father.
“ Who hath ears to hear let him hear*.”

And if an analogy so apt, and similitudes so strong, will not procure an attention to the Saviour of the world, when he calls thus aloud to men, they must be deaf indeed!

Whence can this deafness, this indifference or inattention to our best and everlasting welfare arise? Is the frequency of death, or the shortness and uncertainty of

* Matt. xiii. 30. 37, &c.

life, the reason of that general indifference and unconcern, which we see in men, to the affair of religion? no! surely, the great change from death to everlasting life, the sudden and swift passage from this to the other world, and all our views of mortality here, with the certainty of a retribution hereafter, for we know and feel ourselves to be accountable for our conduct, are affecting scenes, and weighty motives to religion!

Or, is the evidence for the greatest and most important points of religion so feeble and obscure, as not to influence the mind? It cannot be want of evidence; for we have it in our own breasts, if we will but attend to all the mind can suggest, in favor of its own future existence, and the proper means for insuring its own future happiness. Besides, the foundation of all religion and all laws, without which men never have been, nor does it seem possible that they ever can be governed, is the existence

istence of a supreme cause, a divine providence, and a future state. And therefore they must be true: for it is impossible to suppose, that the Author of nature would make it necessary for men to be governed by a lye. This admitted is a very good reason for examining the evidences in favor of revelation; and whenever they are carefully and impartially examined, they will not fail to convince.

Let us, therefore, again ask, what powerful charm is it, that can withdraw the mind from the contemplation of its own immortality, or subdue the proper influence of it on the actions of men? The answer is, future considerations, because they are future, are made to yield to the present; and the appetites of men, and the affairs of the world, which are mortal, withdraw the mind from its view of immortality. But all men acknowledge it to be very improvident, at least, to lay out all upon the present hour, and be in want
for

for the rest of our life : or, when we provide for our own posterity, and in this world extend our thoughts beyond our continuance in it, not to take some care of ourselves is against all common sense and reason. And yet that men do neglect themselves, I mean, their future happiness, is plain from the characters of such as are extortioners, and unjust, impure, impious, and uncharitable. It was not, therefore, without the highest reason that our Saviour, his disciples, and immediate followers, have left so many censures of the world, and have condemned it, and the slaves thereof, as carnal and perishable, since the doctrines of Christ are spiritual, and life and immortality were set in the clearest light by his gospel.

If the first Christian preachers of righteousness had attended more than they did to secular affairs, they must have neglected the business of their master, and have been unfaithful and unprofitable servants.

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Their entire contempt of the world, even to the suffering of torments and an ignominious death, is astonishing; and their fatigues, and labors, and sufferings, are so many clear testimonies in favor of all they said, and of the assurances they certainly had of rising from the dead, in like manner as they had actually beheld their Lord and Master, and of being partakers of inexpressible joys, for evermore, with him in his heavenly kingdom.

The first Christians were obliged more particularly to detach themselves from the world, as they “were chosen out of the world, and hated by it:” not but that every Christian man since is equally obliged to have his loins girt, or be in readiness to part with all, and follow Christ; though he is not, since the establishment of Christianity in the world, exposed to so many persecutions as before, nor so often called upon to leave all for the sake of Christ. And if any think this discipline

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severe,

severe, let him think also of the reward, which is infinite. If he shall say with Peter, “ behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore ?” Jesus says, not only unto the apostles, “ verily, I say unto you, that ye, “ who have followed me, shall, in the re- “ generation, when the Son of Man shall “ sit in the throne of his glory, sit also “ upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve “ tribes of Israel ;” but unto us also, “ every one, that hath forsaken houses, or “ brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, “ or wife, or children, or lands, for my “ name’s sake, shall receive an hundred “ fold, and shall inherit everlasting life*.”

Glorious and inestimable recompence, for our being ready to part from those things, which, however dear and valuable, are lent us for a short time only, and of which it is in the power of a thousand accidents to deprive us every moment !

* Matt. xix. 27, 28, 29:

But

But let every one take heed not to abuse these declarations of our Lord, as if they gave an authority to withdraw themselves from social life; on the contrary, all the moral precepts, so often and so well inculcated in the several parts of the Christian dispensation, suppose us engaged in the active duties of life, and oblige us to be circumspect, and just, and good in all our actions, and particularly recommend and enjoin benevolence and philanthropy, or love of men, which can never be discharged without attending to the business of men. It is not necessary to the character of a Christian, that he cease to be a man; no, he must be the best of men, and set an example, that may be seen and followed by all the world: for Christians are required to behave in such a manner, that their actions, like the sun, may be conspicuous, and bright, and diffusive, and that God himself may be glorified thereby.

“Ye are the light of the world. A city
“that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

F 2

“Neither

“ Neither do men light a candle, and put
“ it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick;
“ and it giveth light unto all that are
“ in the house. So let your light shine
“ before men, that they may see your good
“ works, and glorify your Father which is
“ in heaven *.”

To follow Christ is not to retire from the world, or to refuse the good gifts, which God hath so liberally bestowed upon us. It is not to set ourselves against the laws of the creation, and oppose the express conditions of nature and humanity. But it is to use the things of this life, without abusing them. We are permitted to gratify the sense and the appetites, in such manner, and under such restraints, as are prescribed by the laws of God, and the society in which we live. Christian perfection does not consist in abstaining from particular meats; for “ every creature of

* Matt. v. 14, 15, 16.

“ God is good, and nothing to be refused,
“ if it be received with thanksgiving.”
Nor does it consist in celibacy, bodily austerities, or “ will-worship:” so far from it, the commanding of them is expressly said to be the mark of antichrist, or of those latter times, in which the Christian church should be very grossly corrupted. And what merit can these monks and anchorites claim by their pretended self-denials and hardships, since it is much easier thus to retire from the world, than to discharge our duty, by becoming active and useful members in it? it is much easier thus to avoid, than resist temptation. But can a man retire from the world, and really think he has discharged his duty in it; or made a proper use of the talents, with which his Lord hath intrusted him? or is he not rather “ the unprofitable
“ servant that digged in the earth, and
“ hid his lord’s money?” to whom this answer was made, “ thou wicked and
“ slothful servant, thou oughtest to have

“ put my money to the exchangers, and
“ then at my coming I should have re-
“ ceived mine own with usury. Take
“ therefore the talent from him, and give
“ it to him that hath ten.”

But he must not act with the disposition of a miser; he must not place his happiness entirely in the possession of what is perishable; nor carry inextinguishable desires out of the world with him for that which he cannot there enjoy, because it is mortal. Friendship, and all the other moral affections, may and will attend the mind in its passage to the other world, because they are immortal, and necessary to our happiness, being part of that love which endureth for ever.

All divines have ever agreed in this, that the present life is a state of trial and probation for the next. But it is not every Christian, that knows the full force and real consequence of this doctrine. It is not

only to bear with patience the calamities, which may befall him; but it is to command his appetites, and subdue all the members of the body to the mind, that when it leaves the body, it may, at the same time, leave every carnal affection of it; for whatever carnal affection remains will be an incumbrance to the soul.

He who can thus triumph over the world has great advantage in the hour of death. The mind, that has given this proof of its power and obedience, is thereby fitly prepared for scenes of greater trust and action. And this will afford sufficient reason for the first lodgment of the mind in body, and for all the various trials and difficulties it encounters therein; though perhaps a more intimate knowledge of the material world, than could have been acquired in an unembodied state, may be serviceable to us hereafter. But this is conjecture only; and enough is revealed for the satisfaction of all reasonable enquirers,

without being wise above what is written.

One thing is indeed necessary, without which we cannot be happy, either in this world or the next ; which is made the end and fulfilling of the whole law, peculiarly inculcated in the Christian dispensation, and called by Christ himself his “ new commandment,” which is by St. Paul said to be above every other gift, and without which, even if a man should give all that he has in alms to the poor, and his body to be burned, it will profit him nothing : and this, the distinguishing characteristic of all true Christians, is, “ the
“ love that suffereth long, and is kind ;
“ that envieth not ; is not puffed up ;
“ doth not behave itself unseemly ;
“ seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked ; thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not
“ in iniquity, but in the truth ; covereth
“ all things (the failings of other men)
“ believeth all things, hopeth all things,
“ endureth

“ endureth all things *.” Good God ! is it possible to conceive, that so excellent a mind as this should ever be extinguished and lost to the universe ; or that it should not be, or be otherwise than happy !

But, let the cruel, haughty, oppressive, unjust, fraudulent, unfaithful, wicked, impious, unclean, uncharitable man consider, what all or any of these qualities can avail him in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment ; when “ the righteous man
 “ shall stand up in great boldness before
 “ the face of such as have afflicted him, and
 “ made no account of his labors ; when
 “ the tares shall be separated from the
 “ wheat, the goats from the sheep, the
 “ wicked from the good, and every one
 “ receive according to the works he hath
 “ done, whether they be good or evil.”
 Then will be felt the importance of that saying of our Lord, “ If thou wilt enter
 “ into life, keep the commandments.”

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

S E R M O N VI.

2 TIM. iii. 4.

*Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of
God.*

THIS is part of the character of certain bad men, who were to come in the last days, and whose appearance was to denote the approach of perilous times. “ For men shall be lovers of their own
“ selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blas-
“ phemers, disobedient to parents, un-
“ thankful, unholy, without natural affec-
“ tion, truce-breakers, false accusers, in-
“ continent, fierce, despisers of those that
“ are good, traitors, heady, high-minded,
“ lovers of pleasures more than lovers of
“ God.” That these men were to appear in
the

the last times is no proof, that there have not been as wicked men in former times, as at present ; for by the *last* or *latter time* is meant, not the end of the world, but the end of the Jewish state, and the times of Messiah, who came to fulfil the law, and to complete revelation. That even the apostolic age itself was not entirely free from corruption and iniquity is evident from this declaration of St. Paul, that “ the mystery of iniquity doth already work *.” And in his description of those wicked men in the text, though speaking of the last days, he does not except the present ; for he says, “ of this sort are they who “ creep into houses, and lead captive silly “ women,” such as were “ laden with “ sins, led away with divers lusts. But “ they shall proceed no farther ; for their “ folly shall be manifest to all.” And from such he advises his disciple Timothy to *turn away*.

* 2 Thess. ii. 7.

There never was a time, in which human nature was exempt from vice and folly. Every age supplies us with glaring proofs of our imperfections and failings. But that such enormous crimes, as the apostle mentions, should shew themselves in the days of the Messiah, and under a dispensation, which obliges men to love others as themselves, to be chaste and pious, patient and meek, sober and industrious, forgiving and forbearing one another, is far more astonishing, than to read of them in the darker ages of the world.

Revelation has given men great light into the knowlege of their duty, and has added many new motives to encourage them in the performance of it. But to what purpose is it to have the advice of a skilful physician, if it is not followed, or to know a certain remedy, if the patient is determined not to take it? When men are in love with their disease, which is often the case in moral disorders, the cure is to them as
sick-

sickness, and their distemper health. They must first be persuaded that they are sick, and in danger, before they will hear of any such applications to the mind, as sorrow and repentance.

When pleasure is the disease, who will be persuaded, that he is sick? Is the love of pleasure criminal in man? is not pleasure happiness, and should not every being strive to be happy? can we be too happy? can we therefore be too eager in pursuit of pleasures? Yes, we may become “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

If by pleasure we mean those gratifications, which are agreeable to the dictates of the mind, as well as of the body; such as reason and religion approve; and which are not only productive of immediate satisfaction, but pleasant on an after-view, and consistent with the ultimate happiness of man, when he is recompensed according to his works; such reasonable pleasures as
these

these the scriptures no where forbid. But this is not the general acceptation of the word. This is the language of the religious and the philosopher, and not the man of pleasure.

Religion or reason are seldom heard by those who are over fond of pleasure, whose mind sickens with remorse, when, but a moment absent from the hurry of diversions, it is permitted to review the actions of the man. Perpetual variety, and a gratification of the louder passions, I mean such as delight in noise and confusion, force the spirits to such a height, as to do violence both to the body and the mind, to nature as well as reason. This is not pleasure, but madness. And when the passions are forced beyond their proper bounds, they certainly become furious; and the distinction made by reason between the man and the brute is lost.

Nor

Nor is this all, for disease, and want, and misery, and that, which to a generous heart is most intolerable, contempt, are the consequences of being such lovers of pleasures, as not to be influenced, in the pursuit of them, by the most awful remonstrances from heaven.

On the other hand, if appetite and passion were not permitted to run wild from the guidance of reason; if they were with moderation indulged, and treated as subordinate motives to action, as servants and not as masters, no confusion or remorse would hurt the mind, no excess or violence injure the body, but health and happiness would be secured to both.

Pleasures that innocency may partake of, though not violent, are perpetual; and much more satisfactory than such tumultuous joys as are neither safe, nor innocent, nor lasting; rendered incomplete by the dethronement of reason, and sadly embittered

tered by the just reproaches she will make, when the violence of the fever shall abate.

Could young persons, by any means, be made sensible of the cruel consequences which inevitably follow an unbounded indulgence of appetite and passion, it is not to be supposed, they would sacrifice their youth, their fortunes, their health, and happiness to disease and misery. They may see the fatal effects of incontinence, or the excessive love of pleasure, in others; but few become wise by any other experience besides their own. They will certainly dread any pernicious effects they themselves may have felt; but it is not so certain, that they will take warning by the misfortunes of other men. Example works powerfully on all, but then it is not the good example alone that has power to influence; the wicked man will have his followers, as well as the good; and example will be equally extensive, whether it be good or bad.

G

This

This should teach them, who cannot but know the paths they tread are not the ways of happiness or peace, but such as lead to destruction, to take care, that their evil example does not, like a consuming fire, communicate itself to others, and destroy them.

Men are too apt to think, that, in a course of many vices, they hurt themselves only ; and it is often said of the vicious man, that he is an enemy to nobody but himself : whereas, on the contrary, he is an enemy to society, by being an enemy to himself. And as no man is so very inconsiderable, as to be without friends or acquaintance, his example will have some influence on the conduct of others. And when bad example has spread so far, as to become almost general, which may possibly be the case, some vices may then become fashionable, and consequently men no longer ashamed of them. For he who would blush to do
certain

certain acts, whilst they are by most men disapproved, will perhaps have no scruple to do them, when encouraged by the general practice of his fellow-citizens. In common language, such a one is said to be kept in countenance by others, that is, the blush is prevented, and shame ceases to operate.

Men are too apt to justify their conduct by the practice of others; and to suppose, if they are not singular in iniquity, though they may have their foibles with other men, they have no vices. And thus, if it should be the fashion not to do that which is lawful and right, or to do that which ought not to be done, the excuse may be, that it is general. As if no one were to blame, when all are in the wrong, or it were sufficient to say, if it be a vice, it is the vice of the age. But if all were to be punished, could individuals escape? and is it not reasonable to suppose, that if crimes are not punished by human laws, because they are general, that they may

for that very reason be severely punished from above? But if neither plague, nor famine, nor earthquake destroy them, certain however it is, that no state ever continued long, after it was become universally corrupt and degenerate.

This, it is to be hoped, is not our case at present. But if we are not so depraved as to be the immediate objects of divine vengeance, have we no reason to dread the displeasure of Providence? have we no great and general corruptions to lament, no public sins to repent of? Whether we have or have not, let us endeavour to preserve ourselves pure and incorrupt, free from the bondage of sin, which is the only sure means of preserving us free from every other species of slavery. Let us boast of liberty to do good, and not of licentiousness, “that it may be well with us, and
“with our children after us.”

Extra-

Extravagance and luxury, when universal, are in their own nature destructive of communities, which as they are founded in honesty and industry, and grow great by œconomy and labor, cannot be maintained by dissipation and idleness.

The immoderate love of pleasure resolves and enervates the minds and limbs of men, and they become less active and hardy than their ancestors.

Pleasure is a boundless ocean, calm and smooth near shore, but at a distance ever agitated with outrageous storms. He that keeps within sight of land, may be safe and happy; he that ventures farther is in great danger of being irrecoverably lost.

The love of pleasure is too apt to seduce us from one degree of intemperance to another, till having passed beyond the bounds that reason and religion have set up; having left those faithful guides too

far behind us, we wander, we know not where, without them, and seldom return from the wild pursuit of objects raised by impetuous and tyrannic passions to the milder government of piety and prudence.

It is not criminal to seek pleasure, when truth and innocence join us in the search; but every step advanced without them is wrong; and when they withdraw, the pursuit should end.

Religion does not demand of its votaries so rigid and austere a discipline as never to rejoice; on the contrary it requires them to “rejoice evermore.” A cheerful heart is the natural result of innocence, the characteristic of true religion and virtue: whereas melancholy appears at a distance in the train of piety.

Neither reason nor religion condemn the moderate use of chaste delights. It is incontinence and excess that is to be carefully

fully avoided, lest voluptuousness and intemperance be mistaken for happiness, and in the end men become “ lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

So predominant is the love of pleasure in some minds, that every other consideration must submit to that, as if there were no other duty incumbent on them, and they were made for no other purpose, than only to prosecute their pleasures with unbounded licentiousness. The necessary pauses they must make, for nature demands rest, are employed in contriving successive pleasures without end; and appetite and passion lead forth to every action, whilst reason and conscience are lost in the busy and perpetual hurry of enjoyments, as they are called, fatal to repose, prejudicial to health, injurious to society, and subversive of religion.

Nature cannot long support the shocks it must receive from ungovernable passions,

that are continually indulged, and will become too feeble to supply succeeding ages with a race of men, more virtuous and hardy than their parents. And whilst every one is busy in pursuit of pleasures, regardless of his own real interest, how is it to be imagined he can attend to that of the community?

Societies owe their origin to labor and industry, and virtue and necessity; whereas the birth of pleasure is of affluence and idleness, and the end vanity and vexation of spirit at least, and promoted to excess, dissolution. Should religion appear, it must either rule or be gone; for if it is not permitted to command, it cannot obey. It will allow of pleasure, but then it assigns bounds that must not be past, and guards even the approaches to it with proper cautions, that it may serve as an ally, and not prove, as it otherwise would, a dangerous enemy.

We

We know from experience how strong a propensity there is in human hearts to pleasure, and how much easier it is to go forwards, in the pursuit of what seems pleasing to the eye and heart, than to retreat from it. If our passions and appetites, our desires and fancies, have been early curbed, and broke to the management of reason, they will not run away with us; but if they have been often suffered to break loose from the reins of piety and prudence, nothing can stop them, till they have destroyed themselves by their own rage and fury. If complacency of mind, a cool head, an honest heart, virtuous and pious dispositions, if health and strength of body and of mind are the greatest blessings in this life, we should take care so to direct our actions, that we may not be deprived of them by the hasty and immoderate pursuit of pleasures.

Not to repeat what has been insisted on already, that sickness and many other
bodily

bodily infirmities are the consequence of indulging pleasures to excess ; not to recite all the variety of misfortunes, that will most probably happen to the voluptuous, who waste their time and fortunes in riot and debauchery, and what is called a perpetual round of diversions ; let us reflect a little on the consequences thereof to others : for some, who think they are at liberty to do with themselves and their own as they please, may be startled to find, that the mischief does not rest there, but communicates itself to others, and that a man's ruining himself may be a great injury to those he would be sorry and unwilling to hurt. In societies every man is accountable to the public for his own behavior. As he is protected by the society, he acts not for himself only, but for the public, and ought therefore to be extremely careful not to corrupt others by setting them a bad example. And if this is a duty he owes the public, can less be expected from him, in the smaller society of his
own

own family, or among his friends and acquaintance? can he debauch himself and not injure them? will they not feel the effects of his extravagance, or not be distressed when he is undone? And what sort of principles are youth likely to imbibe from the practices of those whose only pursuit is pleasure? They will be trained up to the like courses, and in time surpass those, who first taught them to tread the broad ways that lead to destruction. They will disregard religion, because it imposes proper restraints upon the passions, and not only forbids sin, but the approaching it, lest the limits should be transgressed, and because the descent to vice is easy, and the retreat arduous and painful. We may advance towards sin with pleasures in our eye, but when we return back, it must be with sorrow and repentance in our heart. But as pleasure is most alluring, and consequences, however dangerous, if distant, do not influence as they ought, the utmost caution

caution should be taken not to indulge the love of pleasure too much.

We may not be entirely destitute of all religious sentiments ; we may have the form of godliness ; but what will this avail, if we deny the power of it ? If we confess the truth of religion with our lips, and disown it by our actions, we are hypocrites, and self-condemned.

So alluring and deceitful are pleasures, so full of temptation, and, in the end, so big with mischief to ourselves and the public, that we cannot err in putting some restraint upon our pleasures, if it be but to shew, that they are not absolute masters of us.

Nature designed us for labor, and it is necessary to health, and procures sweeter rest than idleness. Business will give those spirits, which in vain are solicited without it : and such œconomy, as is consistent with
hospi-

hospitality, and that species of frugality, which will put it in one's power to be liberal, will not only procure all the independence, which a good and wise man can desire, but will enable him, with a small fortune, to raise more noble monuments, and do more good than the wasteful and extravagant, with great riches.

If therefore we would sincerely promote our own happiness here and for ever; if we would be deemed useful members of society, and good men in our private families; if we value health, and long life, and fame, and immortality, let us be moderate in our pursuit of pleasures; let us not set too great a value on them, knowing how transient and unsatisfactory they are; and by no means let us suffer them to acquire such an absolute dominion over our hearts, as to make us “lovers of pleasures more
“ than lovers of God.”

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S E R M O N VII.

LUKE XV. 31, 32.

And he said unto him, son, thou art ever with me; and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.

THIS is the conclusion of the parable of the prodigal son. It is told at large by St. Luke, with many circumstances which are very natural, and very affecting. The father's goodness, the prodigal's repentance, and the jealousy of his elder brother, are described in such terms as shew the author of the parable to have had the most perfect knowledge of human nature and the human heart.

The father's tendernefs towards his children is fuch, that he can refufe them nothing. And when the younger fon demands his portion of goods, the father divides his living. After which the younger fon leaves him, and goes into a foreign country, where he wafes his fubftance with riotous living; and is at laft, through folly and extravagance, reduced to the greateft mifery and want: “and no man
“gave unto him.” But left this circumftance fhould reflect upon human nature, the divine Author informs us, that “there was
“a mighty famine in that land.” The prodigal thus diftrefsed, and almoft famifhed, “would fain have filled his
“belly with the hulks, that the fwine
“did eat.” This brings him to himfelf; and he fees and laments the difference between his prefent fituation, and that of his father's hired fervants. “They have
“bread enough and to fpare, and I perifh
“with hunger.” He thereupon refolves to go to his father, to acknowlege his offence,

offence, to own that he is not worthy to be received again as a son, and to intreat his father to take him only as one of his hired servants.

The penitent son forms a truer judgment of his own demerit than of his father's love. For his father, when he saw him, though far off, and not appearing as his son, but almost naked, and disfigured, if not by his riots, by his sufferings, yet knows him, has compassion on him, and even runs to meet him, and falls on his neck and kisses him. How great is the love of this tender-hearted parent for his degenerate son! who being sensible of his own unworthiness, says unto him, "Father, I have sinned
 " against heaven, and before thee, and am
 " no more worthy to be called thy son."
 The elder brother, and therefore the father, knew, that the younger brother had been a sinner; but if the father had not known it, the son himself informs him of it. Be it so; it is enough that he is alive who

was dead, that he is found who was lost. The parent's transports are too great to admit of reproaches. The secret language of his heart is this: "if my son has offended, " he repents, and I forgive him." If he declares himself unworthy, it is a proof to his father that he is not so; for instead of reproving him, he calls out instantly to his servants to bring forth the best robe, to dress him, and to put a ring upon his hand: and there is great rejoicing in the father's house. The fatted calf is killed, they have music, and they dance. But the elder brother is angry, and will not go in. The father comes out, and intreats him; and when this son charges his brother with having led a debauched life, and his father with partiality towards him, the good man still shews his affection to be superior to resentment, and only justifies himself by saying, "Son, thou art ever with me, and " all that I have is thine. It was meet " that we should make merry and be " glad: for this thy brother was dead and " is

“is alive again ; and was lost and is
“found.”

From hence let parents learn to be dispassionate and good ; to forget and to forgive the faults of a penitent child ; not to be irreconcilable as enemies to their offspring. Let it be seen, that their displeasure is with the vices, and not the persons of their children ; and when they repent, let the joy of their parents be equal to that of the prodigal's father, upon the return of his son. But if some parents seem to have lost that affection nature has so deeply imprinted on the human heart, others may be too indulgent. The child is to be spared, but not his vices.

It does not appear from the parable, and therefore cannot be supposed, that either of the sons were disobedient to this good father, or very bad, before the younger son left him, and became a prodigal. This child had the seeds of goodness in him,

otherwise he had not repented, and returned again to his father, saying, "Father, " I have sinned against heaven, and before " thee, and am no more worthy to be " called thy son." The father loved his son, and therefore could not but wish to see him again; and the son knew so well the excellency of his father's disposition, that he did not hesitate to approach him. He did not, however, presume to expect that his father would receive him as his son; his request was to be admitted only as a hired servant into his family, where, if he had continued, he would not have been exposed to the temptations which had too easily beset and betrayed him. Under the eye of such a parent, his sense of duty, of shame and modesty, and the constant example of sobriety, and goodness, and every virtue, would have secured him against those excesses, to which he became an easy prey, when he had left his father's house. His substance, he might think, would not so soon have failed him; but waste and riot
are

are such enemies, as no substance can maintain. He might think, that whatever became of his substance, his friends and companions would never forsake him; but such friends and companions, as are acquired by extravagance and debauchery, love not the man, but his vices, and always leave him when he is no longer able to support them in their excesses; and amongst other men he will find few to pity him. “No man gave unto him.” He is driven from human kind, and seeks his food among the swine. “He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.” There is something in this part of the parable, that suits the character of such as have made themselves filthy with every moral turpitude: and the image is the more striking, as the Jews are known to have a great aversion to that animal. In this miserable condition he, who before had attended to nothing but the gratification of his appetites, is now said to “come to himself.” The difference

between the hired servants of his father's house, who had bread enough and to spare, and himself, the son of that father, though now reduced to a condition worse than that of the swine he mixed with, brought him to a sense of his transgression and duty. What a transition, from a state of affluence, honor, and respect, to that of envying the swine their filthy husks, and wishing to feed with them ! When he is ready to perish with hunger, he raises himself up from the ground, and resolves to go to his father. He is now made sensible of his errors, owns his unworthiness, and determines to beg of his father, that he will be so good as to take him, not as his son, but as a hired servant. When he returns, he is forgiven. Such repentance intitled him to pardon. He had already suffered for his follies ; and those sufferings had obtained their moral end and purpose, by leading the sinner to repentance, and by producing an example to deter others from such evil practices, as are attended with so much misery,

misery, and may in the end prove fatal. If this prodigal was reduced to say, "I perish," another may indeed perish: and if his father had not been a merciful and forgiving father, to whom could he have gone for relief, when no man would give unto him? Delays are dangerous; but never more so than in cases of repentance. He who puts off repentance to another day shews rather the irresistible power his sins have over him, than any real disposition in him to repent. Every act of compliance with his vices is a new defeat, and he will grow weaker and weaker as they continue to triumph over him. The safest way would be never to leave so good a father as the prodigal had. When he left him to go into a foreign country, he removed himself far from the person and assistance of his father. The presence of that good man no longer influenced his conduct; his voice was no longer heard, his advice no longer regarded. The young man was his own master; he was under

no restraint, and was therefore easily betrayed by his own passions and appetites, and the bad examples of others, to waste his substance with riotous living. It is very difficult for young men, left to themselves, to stem the current of their own desires, and to turn away the eye and heart from every bad example they will meet with in life. Nothing tends more to the misleading, and consequently the destruction of young men, than a hasty and injudicious choice of their acquaintance; for they will soon resemble those in all their qualities, with whom they associate. Next to a bad education, bad company is the greatest evil and misfortune that can happen to the young and unexperienced. Evil communication corrupts good manners. It leads to the extremest calamities, and in the end may not be attended with the penitence of the prodigal, or that ready forgiveness and kind reception which he met with from a most indulgent father.

indulgent father. Or if it should, the father's goodness may not be found in every one of his family. The elder brother in the parable was offended at his father's goodness. He looked upon his brother as an outcast and a reprobate, as one who did not deserve the favors his father bestowed upon him. He feels no joy on his brother's return : he rather envies him any share in his father's love. He says, it is unmerited, and the entertainment such as had never been allowed him, who had always been his obedient child and never left him. To which the father with great mildness replies, " Son, thou art ever with me, and " all that I have is thine." The father himself intreats the elder brother to come in, and to partake of the common joy for the recovery of a son, that was dead and is alive, that was lost and is found. The excuse he makes to his father for not going in is a mere pretence. It is not the transgression of his brother, but his own envy, and jealousy, and pride that makes him
refuse

refuse so kind an invitation from so affectionate a father. He would not admit of any partner in his father's house : he would have all to himself ; and though there is enough for both, he is displeased at the killing of a calf, and the rejoicing on account of his brother's return. This churlishness of the elder brother admirably well expresses the temper of the Jews, and leads to the application of the parable.

It was a very ancient practice used by the prophets, and by eastern sages, to utter parables, and convey instruction by similitudes. This may offend less than any other, when a man is to be reprov'd ; and it illustrates the precept or doctrine it conveys by example. David might have been provok'd at Nathan, if he had directly charg'd him with the crime he was guilty of with respect to Uriah, but his anger was averted from the prophet to the guilt and guilty person by the parable of the little ewe lamb. And in this of the prodigal,

digal, the Jews could not have been more tenderly admonished of their selfishness and inhumanity, than under the character of the elder son: and at the same time that it reproves them, and unfolds some other truths relating to those times, as shall immediately be explained, it communicates the best advice confirmed by example.

The father is God; “our Father which
“is in heaven.” The substance or patrimony he divides is all that mankind derive from that great being who created and preserves them. The younger brother is that people, who by the worshipping of idols and other superstitious vanities had alienated and estranged themselves from the true God, the Father of mankind. They left him, as a son, who takes a journey into a far country, leaves his father. Such were the Gentiles, “without God and without
“hope, aliens from the commonwealth
“of Israel, and strangers to the covenant.” The blessings that God had bestowed upon
them,

them, their powers and faculties, the substance that our heavenly Father divides among all his children, were misapplied and abused; the true notion of God and his worship was almost entirely lost; and with it, the practice of those virtues, which are not only taught, but sustained by religion; and in the end they were debased so far beneath the dignity of human nature, as instead of the sons of God to become the companions of swine. Such was the degeneracy of these men, that they are not unfitly represented as herding with the beasts that perish. Religion they had none, or such only as reflected on the majesty and goodness of God, rather than tended to his glory; and their manners were so barbarous and impure, that they shewed they had departed far from the influence and design of him who made them. In this wretched condition they were not to be compared with the meanest of God's household. The hired servant in the father's house is better than
the

the son who has left him, and with him his piety and goodness, so as to be no more worthy of being called his son. "A day," says the Psalmist, "in thy courts is better than a thousand: I would choose rather to sit at the threshold of the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*." And when this is the disposition of a man's mind, when he repents and prays to be restored to the divine favor, "though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool†."

Such is God's goodness to his poor, degenerate, fallen creature man; and it is surprizing that any should be found among such beings as men are, averse to God's being merciful to us all. Since "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," if all will repent,

* Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

† Isaiah i. 18.

why should not all be saved, being “freely
“justified by the grace of God, through
“the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*.”
If we have no compassion for others, how
can we expect any from others? If we think
all other men are improper objects of
mercy, because they are sinners, are we
ourselves perfectly innocent? have we no
failings? can we pretend to the right of
throwing the first stone at an offending
brother, as being men who have never
offended? God knows this was no more
the condition of the Jews than of the
Gentiles. All men are sinners. But the
Jews not only gave themselves the prefer-
ence, as descended from Abraham, the
father of the faithful, but opposed all re-
conciliation with the Gentiles, because
they were not of the circumcision; not
considering, that Abraham was accepted of
God before the institution of that rite; and
that when the Messiah came all distinc-

* Rom. iii. 23, 24.

tions were to be dropt, and all men become one people, under one God and Father of all, who made them, and one Lord and Saviour, the mediator between God and man, who redeemed them. The Jews were offended at our Saviour for receiving sinners, and eating with them; on which occasion our Saviour justifies himself by relating several parables, the lost sheep, the piece of silver that was lost, and the prodigal son, as he is usually called, whose elder brother is the Jew, that complains of his father's goodness, as if the forgiving a penitent child were an injury to him, who pretends never to have transgressed the commandments of his father. In this case nothing was to be taken away from the elder son, who had never left his father: all that the father had was his. A brother should have looked upon the recovery of a brother as an acquisition to his family. He should not have refused the father's invitation, to "make merry" and be glad, for this thy brother was
"dead

“ dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.” The father in addressing his elder son says not, my son, but thy brother is alive and is found. Where there is substance enough for all, it is injurious to forbid others to partake. If there is pasture sufficient for all the sheep, why should they not become one fold under one shepherd? The sheep of the other fold, who were to be brought, and made to hear the voice of Jesus, that great shepherd of our souls*, are the Gentiles, the younger brother that was dead and lost.

Nothing can be more unreasonable and absurd, than the partiality and prejudice of the Jews against the Gentiles. Not only their prophets had predicted the return of their prodigal brother **or** the Gentiles, but the institution of those ceremonies, which kept them from polluting themselves with idols, and other vain and superstitious prac-

* John x. 16.

tices, was now superseded, and all were to acknowledge the same God and Father. The end and design of circumcision and other Jewish rites and ceremonies was accomplished by the coming of Christ, “in whom all things were to be made one*.”

And it is to be wished that all, who profess themselves to be the disciples and followers of Jesus, would consider his great and new commandment, his favourite precept, which he himself principally urged and insisted on, as the end and fulfilling of the whole law, the criterion of his religious institution, and the mark by which all men might know his disciples: they are to love one another as brethren, and as parts and members of one and the same body, of which Jesus Christ is the head.

Away then with all hatred and animosity, and party and envy. “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that

* Ephes. i. 10.

“ which is evil; cleave to that which is
 “ good. Be kindly affectioned one to an-
 “ other with brotherly love. Be of the
 “ same mind one towards another, and, as
 “ much as lieth in you, live peaceably
 “ with all men †.”

† Rom. xii. 9, &c.

S E R M O N

“ which

[131]
S E R M O N VIII.

ROMANS ii. 14, 15.

*When the gentiles, which have not the law,
do by nature the things contained in the
law, these having not the law are a law
unto themselves, which shew the work of
the law written in their hearts.*

TH E minds of some are so tender,
that the gentlest methods are to be
tried; but then there are others so ob-
durate, that the loudest calls seem scarce
sufficient to awaken them to a sense of
duty; and those arguments that almost
drive the one to despair, are not always
pungent enough to make the other feel.

The different degrees of sensibility in men are so great, that the tender-hearted are often objects of mirth and laughter to the stern and callous : and the man in higher spirits is not supposed to have the pity, which we find in more melancholy minds. But, in truth, the truly brave are always humane and compassionate ; nor is the tender heart unsusceptible of cheerfulness.

No one amiable quality is inconsistent with another ; but pity and courage may inhabit the same breast, and tears flow from those eyes, on sight of the afflictions of another, which have steadily beheld, without fear, the approach of the greatest dangers to themselves.

He that pretends to be without a heart, without feeling, and utterly devoid of humanity, should not associate with the human species, for he cannot have any humane or social qualities. To call com-
passion

passion weakness, and the tender passions effeminacy, is an affront to human nature; for they distinguish men from brutes: and it is better to have them always open to the calls of nature, and readily affected by their several objects, than to have them shut up, and so become impenetrable and insensible.

What is love, or friendship, society, or indeed humanity, but the effects and influence of those desires which we feel within us, and which carry their own motives with them, and in a manner enforce themselves by the pain or pleasure that always attends them?

Friendship with the hard-hearted man is impossible; and if the cruel and the callous man does no mischief, it is more owing to a dread of punishment than to a sense of duty.

Love, or genuine benevolence, is the conscious union or intercourse of hearts, filled

and dilated with mutual and kind affections ; it is a more exalted state of friendship. I speak of true love, or that christian grace which is said to be the fulfilling of the whole law, and not of carnal appetites.

Humanity implies a world of virtues, and is in our language, for it is peculiar to it, used for every internal affection that is good or kind, and comprehends them all. How then can society subsist without it? Society without friendship, love, humanity, or any mutual affection is contradictory and impossible.

A man without passions would be immoveable, being without the necessary springs of action ; and, if made up of unkind passions only, would be a dreadful monster, from whose sight men more humanely formed would fly, as from the tiger or the lion. But then they would fly, or rather flock together. For one great de-

sign of wild, untamed beasts suffered to roam about the world at large, and to make even man his prey, though lord of the creation, seems to have been this, to force him into society, for the advantage of greater strength than he finds within himself, and for his better security; and then as men increase, and land is cultivated, the more fierce and savage animals are destroyed; the end of their creation is answered; men no longer dwell in little tribes or parties by themselves; and from the increase of mankind the breed of tame and useful animals is encouraged, and wild monsters no more permitted to devour them. The wild beasts of the field, however, though fierce and cruel, are of use in the general scheme of nature, and are the work of God; but I shall not hesitate to declare the cruel man, as such, to be no part of God's creation. No! he is himself the author of his own barbarity, and must have labored long to have effaced the image of his Maker, after which he was originally formed.

And here let me ask, what have parents or masters to answer for, who add their own wicked examples to the bad dispositions of such unhappy men?

God made man upright, but he has fought out many inventions, and the very worst of all his discoveries is, that of changing himself from the benevolent, inoffensive being, which nature designed him, for she has not given us the teeth and talons of the beasts of prey, into a cruel and malevolent being, equally an enemy to his species and himself.

Sad proof of human liberty! for beings necessitated or impelled change not their habits into contrary habits, but act in one uniform and invariable way, or, to speak more properly, are acted upon, producing effects, at all times, with all their force, and always in the same direction.

That a prerogative so glorious should be so fatally abused, that faculties, without
which

which men could not have been objects of rewards, should be so misapplied as to render them proper objects of punishment is a melancholy reflection: it shews, however, the impropriety of asking, why we were not, in this first state of our rational existence, intrusted with the full exercise of all the powers that may ever be committed to us in another state; for in truth, we have as much power as is fit for creatures of our make and circumstances; and it will be time enough to complain of the want of more, when we can manage what we already have, by directing it all to the wisest and best purposes, the natural end for which it was given. This power will be less liable to abuse, when influenced by the honest dictates of a pure and tender heart, than when swayed by ambition, avarice, and lust.

These passions rise not early in the mind, and owe their violence to art, not nature. The first affections are tender, and the first devia-

deviations from them grievous. “ O
 “ wicked imagination, whence camest
 “ thou in, to cover the earth with de-
 “ ceit*!” Whoever can review by memory
 his infant faults, and call back some of his
 first offences to his mind, his little acts of
 cruelty or of neglect, by which any other
 animal was made sensible of pain, will
 also recollect the anguish he then felt, on
 his first loss of innocence.

This could not be the effect of precept,
 the craft of priests, or the policy of gover-
 nors, but is pure and unbiassed nature, from
 which it will be easy to deduce the work
 of the law, which is properly said to be
 “ written in the heart” of man.

As we are sensible of pain ourselves, so
 by natural sympathy, or consent of minds,
 we never feel ourselves indifferent to the
 pain of others. We find our passions not

* Ecclef. xxxvii. 3.

only excited by the same objects, but by like passions in others, which become objects to us; and joy or sorrow rises in our hearts, as our companion is cheerful or dejected. Generous and beneficent acts are always rewarded by the mind, which instantly diffuses a pleasure, that shews she is gratified thereby. On the contrary, she shrinks from the wicked act, and sheds so much pain upon the agent, that he is sometimes not able to bear his existence in this life, and seeks a retreat in that, wherein the mind, having more power to exert itself, becomes more sensible of horror. For having deserted the station assigned him by Providence, and broken the contract subsisting between the society, and every man protected by it, he cannot be supposed innocent or happy, or not an object of displeasure and punishment.

We know, that gratitude for benefits received by ourselves, and congratulation with others, on their advancement in honors and
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fortunes; that compassion for the distresses of a good man, and joy for his success and relief, are as natural to the mind, if undepraved by bad habits of our own, or of others, which is bad example, as hunger and thirst, or any other appetites of the body. For passions are to the mind or inward man what appetites are to his external frame; with this difference, that the mind, which is immortal, is never satiated by the fruition of its proper objects; whereas the other often nauseates what a little before it eagerly desired. The pleasures of the one are momentary, the joys of the other, like itself, everlasting. To gratify the mind is perpetual happiness; to satisfy the desires of the body, without regarding the mind, and in disobedience to her commands, for every man has a law-giver in his own breast, is perpetual misery. This deduction of the laws of nature from the heart of man requires no examples to illustrate it; every man's experience proves it; and the appeal is to your own minds, and to what you
your-

yourselves must always feel. For, in the
 words of the wise man, “ wisdom is glo-
 “ rious, and never fadeth away: yea, she
 “ is easily seen of them that love her, and
 “ found of such as seek her: she prevent-
 “ eth them that desire her, in making
 “ herself first known unto them. Who so
 “ seeketh her early shall have no great
 “ travail; for he shall find her sitting at
 “ his doors. To think, therefore, upon
 “ her is perfection of wisdom; and who so
 “ watcheth for her shall quickly be with-
 “ out care. For she goeth about seeking
 “ such as are worthy of her; sheweth
 “ herself favorably unto them in the ways,
 “ and meeteth them in every thought.
 “ For the very true beginning of her is
 “ the desire of discipline; and the care of
 “ discipline is love; and love is the keep-
 “ ing her law; and the giving heed unto
 “ her laws is the assurance of incorrup-
 “ tion; and incorruption maketh us near
 “ unto God*.”

* Wisdom vi. 12—19

Some of the best and wisest of the ancient philosophers were so affected with this power, this knowlege, and arbitration of the mind, as to determine from thence, that this world could not have been its first state of rational existence, but that it must have lived before it came into the body; and, in consequence thereof, they maintained that all knowlege was no other than reminiscence. They could not account for the wickedness of some, nor the calamities of all; they could not reconcile the prosperity of the bad, nor the sufferings of the good, in this short state of our present existence, to the goodness, and wisdom, and justice of God, even upon the supposition of a future state of rewards and punishments.

How very different is this from those men, who pretend to reverence the ancient philosophers, and to be philosophers themselves! The Ancients were employed in justifying the ways of Providence, and in spreading

spreading abroad the most honorable notions of men and gods, which they could from the fainter lights of their times investigate; but these, their pretended admirers, too often traduce both the one and the other; and, instead of thinking it necessary to suppose a former state, in order to account for the inequalities and sufferings of this, deny all but the present. As if it were possible to conceive the entire completion of man's existence in this world, when so much of it is consumed in infancy, in sleep, in the vanity of his pursuits, in sickness, and the decline of life; so little left for activity and happiness, and in active life so little yet of truly rational enjoyments! when he is disquieted with perpetual apprehensions of an unknown world, and yet so dissatisfied with this, that he would never wish for the renovation of youth, and repetition of his former days, if they must be passed exactly in the same manner again, or, if he should accept of a renewal upon those terms, would nevertheless think them severe, and find him-

himself the same dissatisfied being in the end as at first !

What ideas must we have of any being, not to take the name of God in vain, who could create such numbers of men as have and will exist, and all to be dissatisfied upon the whole of their existence, if it is to terminate with this life ! And if the end of all is misery to all, whatever gleams of happiness may have darted in upon us in former scenes of this short tragedy of the life and death of man, we must conclude, that we were *created* to be finally miserable ; which is not to be reconciled to any just ideas we can form of God or goodness.

How can we imagine it possible, that the Author of nature should furnish us with capacities for discovering his existence and attributes, and our dependence upon him, with views of another state, and powers to contemplate the laws of many other orbs than this we inhabit, to roam through the bound-

boundless regions of space, with a mind that is never satisfied with less than infinite, if it is to be extinguished by death? No! If we had not been designed for another state, the apprehensions and influences of it would never have been made necessary to the good government of men; eternity would never have been an object either of our hopes, or fears. If our existence were to finish with this world, we might like other animals perform all the offices of supporting ourselves, and continuing our species, without any views or expectations of another. So that, upon the whole, I do not think it possible to reconcile the creation and condition of man with the acknowledged attributes of God, without the consideration and allowance of a future state.

If the presence of Almighty God, from whose all-seeing eye nothing can be hid; if the respect due to those laws he hath written in all human hearts; if the retribu-

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tion we have so much reason to expect, to wish for if we are good, to dread if we are wicked, employed the thoughts of every man more than it is to be feared they do, the world would be much better than it is, and yet men not so fond of it as they are. They would live and die with far greater satisfaction, as better men, with better hopes. Let us not, therefore, set so great a value upon the vain, sensual, perishing and unsatisfying gratifications and possessions of this life, as to hazard everlasting happiness in another. Let us not live like the beasts that perish, without any hopes of another and a better world: but let us secure to ourselves the blessings of health, of affluence, of ease, and happiness here on earth, by pious and virtuous pursuits; that when we are to depart out of this world, we may leave it with little or no regret, and may be such gainers by the change, as no tongue can express, no heart conceive.

S E R M O N IX.

PROVERBS XV. 24.

*The way of life is above to the wise, that he
may depart from hell beneath.*

WHILST some are too prodigal of life, too ready to depart they know not whither, and scarce know for what, others are so over-fond of life as to be inclined to purchase the continuance of it at any rate, and are ready to sacrifice their country, their liberty, their friend, their honor, to preserve a wretched and contemptible being a little longer in this world, without considering what may be their portion in the next. Few know the real estimate of human life. But “ the wise man
“ will look upwards, that he may depart
“ from the grave underneath.”

God made man “after his own image
“and likeness, upright” and good, for
“every thing that he had made was very
“good*.” We should, therefore, consider
man as the fabric of God, not to be injured
nor destroyed without his order, or in op-
position to the laws he has been pleased to
prescribe. We are not to deface the image of
God in man. We are his offspring, his sub-
jects, his servants ; and, therefore, cannot
either quit the station he has assigned us
here, or by sin and folly incapacitate our-
selves for the discharge of our duty in it,
without being guilty of disobedience, deser-
tion, treason.

Man is accountable to him, who
“breathed into his nostrils the breath of
“life,” for that divine particle whereby he
became “a living soul †,” and for the use of
all his faculties. He is not made for him-
self alone. He is a religious and a social

* Gen. i. 26. Eccles. vii. 29. Gen. i. 31. † Gen. ii. 7.
being,

being, related to God as a creature, to man as his brother, and to society as an individual in a large family. All have a share in his life, and a right to his service. If, therefore, he shall destroy himself, or, through negligence, affected laziness, or vicious and destructive courses render himself not only useless, but a burthen and offence to those, whom he ought to serve, his crime is aggravated, and he sins both against God and man. It must be allowed, that he is, at least, a very bad member of society; and should his offences increase, so as to make it necessary to cut him off as a rotten limb, if he does not acknowledge the justness of the sentence by being his own executioner, he is nevertheless to be considered as the author of his own death, and accountable to God for it. Besides the awful relation man bears to God, and the obligation he is under to discharge the public duties of a good citizen, he is not to neglect the more private concerns of his family and friends. He is bound to take care of himself for their sakes as well

as his own. The wicked and debauched acknowledge no other law than their appetites, no other relation than that of the object to its passion, nor any other happiness than what results from sensual gratifications. Their ears are ever shut against the reproofs of religion and the voice of reason, the demands of society, and the admonitions of a friend. They suppose they are to live for themselves only, are not accountable to any other being for their conduct, and are free, because they are averse to the most honorable connexions. Libertines indeed they are, but not free, being the slaves of passion, a tyrant that having dethroned reason misleads and torments his followers with every distress of body and of mind, that human nature is able to endure, which soon terminates in a miserable death. Thus it is that some are said to enjoy life! But, surely, health of body and peace of mind are preferable to loathsome disease, and the canker of an offended conscience.

The

The far greater part of the evils in life are owing to ourselves, they are the effects of sin and folly ; and, without impiety, cannot be charged on the benevolent Author of our being. Is not the greatest part of human miseries the consequence of human vices ? Is not intemperance in some of the race the real source of diseases in most of us ? Is not the want of honesty in some the cause of distress in others ? And should we blame nature, a term improperly used for the creation and providence of God, so often as we do, if men were never to recede from those principles, by which they ought to regulate all their actions ? The man whose intemperance has produced distempers, whose extravagance has terminated in want, whose carelessness has been attended with calamities, should not blame his stars, but himself. Not that every calamity is occasioned by the indiscretion of him that suffers. The good man is not exempt from casualties, from the infirmities of the human frame, sorrow, sickness,

death. He is exposed to injury and injustice from the wicked; but he will not conclude from his sufferings, that this world is a prison and a place of torment, in which all men whatever are to be punished. He will rather esteem this life as a state of trial, in which he is to approve himself, by his actions, a reasonable, sincere, honest, and benevolent, good being. To pine away under the disappointments and calamities of this world, to hasten the approach of death, which is not far from every one of us, and to desert our post, is mean and cowardly.

However painful, obscure, and hazardous the journey through life may be, some rays of sunshine will dart upon us to cheer us, some flowers rise to entertain us, some companions attend to converse with us in the way; and, if we please, we may be under the conduct of the best guides, religion and reason.

What-

Whatever the melancholy and desponding person may think, in whatever dreadful shapes he may represent the miseries of this world to his disturbed, unhappy mind, it is not quite so bad as it is sometimes reported to be; nor are its evils so enormous as not to be subdued or moderated by virtue, patience, and piety. After all, have love and friendship no charms? Are there no social endearments to engage our hearts? No relief from connexions and business against despair? Have we no passions, no amusements, no friends? Yes, there is one Friend, who is ever more ready to hear than we to pray, to give than we to ask; who always inclines his ear to the cries of the distressed, whenever they call upon him; who will abundantly recompense you beyond all you can do or suffer: for he is your God, your king, your father, and your friend. Prayers to him give ease to the afflicted, to men in torment; and seem to have taken away all sense of pain from the first martyrs for the Christian faith.

Let

Let us, therefore, not yield to despair, nor look upon life as an intolerable burthen, nor upon religion, which should inspire all its votaries with cheerfulness, as a melancholy business. Suppose the very worst that can befall us, are we to despair and die? Or should we not rather make our appeal to him, whose providence is over all, who made us, who stationed us here, and who has declared, that he “will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able*.” Let us, therefore, submit with patience; and, from our Saviour in his agonies learn to say, “not my will, but thine be done†.”

How different are the sentiments of some, to whom life is irksome, from the notion of others, who acknowledge no blessing to be comparable to that of continuing in this world, no spectre so horrible, as that which is presented by the king of terrors! No want, no loss, no distress or

* 1 Cor. x. 13,

† Luke xxii. 42.

torture,

torture, no disease, no disgrace, can cure them of their fond desire of life. Whatever miseries they may be afflicted with, death, which puts an end to them, is the worst part of the tragedy. They cannot think of dying but with the utmost horror; the apprehension of it embitters all their hours.

If this terror proceeds from a consciousness of having incurred the displeasure of God by a wicked life, it should not excite a desire of what is impossible, never to die, and never to account; but on the contrary, should engage men to make such a use of the remainder of life, as, by repentance and amendment, may restore to them that comfort and expectation, of which their sins had deprived them. Should the dread of dying proceed from any other cause, it is a weakness which may and ought to be cured. On whatever account we exclaim against mortality, as injurious and unjust, it should be considered, that all we have, however dear, is only lent us for a season; that we
have

have no claim to life; that it is a gift, as all other blessings are, which may be taken away by him who gave it; and that we have no more right to maintain our post, when called upon to leave it, than we have to desert it before the time of our duty is ended. God knows what is best for us all, and we ought patiently to submit to the dispensations of his providence. We may be sure, that it is in his power to reward us infinitely beyond all that we can suffer here, and to those who are “faithful unto death” he has promised a crown of life*.” If we cannot rejoice, as some have done, in our sufferings, we may render them more tolerable, by considering them as the chastisements of a kind father, who, in the midst of severity pursues mercy.

From the outcries against death, as a cruel and unjust tyrant, one would imagine, that all were not subject to his dominion, and

* Revel. ii. 10,

that mortality was only a peculiar hardship inflicted upon some of the species. It is surprizing that the frequency and universality of death does not render it more familiar to men. But though in about thirty years as many die as ever lived at any one time upon earth, it is wisely ordained by Providence, that this removal of his creatures should happen at such intervals of time and place, as not to shock the world. And, in fact, the influence it has upon some minds is so little, that they seldom think of dying, and live as if they were immortal upon earth, though they and it and all things that are therein grow old, decay, and perish.

It is as natural for men to die as to be born. That they shall be born depends upon circumstances; but when they are born, it is certain they must die, for “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*.” It should not,

* Heb. ix. 27.

therefore, be so much our concern to provide against death, seeing it is inevitable, as against a bad life, which will augment the terrors of death and judgment. He who faithfully discharges his duty in every relation, in every part of life, can have nothing to fear : God will take care of him. He will be brave because he is good ; he will not be terrified at any dangers in this world, nor apprehensive of any in the world to come. He knows the goodness of God will not suffer him to be for ever deprived of his reward, and though as a finite being, he is not without his imperfections, having the balance, however, in his favor, he is ever ready to meet his Lord and Master, who will receive him, saying, “ well done, thou “ good and faithful servant, enter thou into “ the joy of thy Lord*.”

The evils we meet with in life, though they are not so great as to excuse suicide, are sufficient to wean us from an excessive

* Matt. xxv. 21.

fondness for this world. And as we cannot extricate ourselves from misery but by death, it should not be made more horrible by fear and fancy than in itself it really is. Let us suppose a man in a far country, exposed to every misfortune and calamity, that men have ever experienced in life; let us suppose him to be informed of another country, where he shall enjoy every comfort, every blessing, which his faculties in their most improved state are capable of receiving; where he shall meet again all the friends he ever had, and converse with beings who are free from sin and folly; where reason, virtue, happiness prevail; where all is good, and great, and glorious, without alloy and without end; would he not wish instantly to be conveyed to this delightful country? Would the terrors of the passage dismay him, when he is assured, that however dark and dismal it may appear, it is as swift as light, and he will be transported thither in the twinkling of an eye? Thus it is with every good man, who, leaving this vale of tears,

tears, goes to the heavenly Jerufalem. As soon as his eyes are closed, his immortal part is in paradise, where he will join the spirits of the blessed. There he will find all his friends, who departed before him, and receive all that follow, if they behave in such a manner, during their short pilgrimage on earth, as to make themselves worthy of being removed to the same region of blifs.

The true way to alleviate the pangs of death, and make our passage into the other world less terrifying, is, to take care so to behave in this world, that we may have no reason to expect a worse situation in the next. They who are diligent and active, industrious and honest, temperate and good, pious, pure, and charitable, are most likely to succeed here and hereafter; to see the return of many happy years in this world, and to be eternally happy in the next.

S E R M O N X.

ROMANS ii. 7, 8.

To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.

TH E apostle begins this Epistle to the Romans with a declaration, that he was “ called to be an apostle, separated
 “ unto the gospel of God, concerning
 “ Jesus Christ our Lord, of the seed of
 “ David according to the flesh, and declared to be the son of God with power,
 “ according to the spirit of holiness, by the

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“ resur-

“ resurrection from the dead. He then
“ thanks God, through Jesus Christ, for
“ all amongst them that were the beloved
“ of God, called to be saints. The rest,
“ who when they knew God, glorified him
“ not as God, neither were thankful, but
“ vain and foolish, having their heart
“ darkened; who changed the glory of the
“ incorruptible God into an image made like
“ to corruptible things, worshipping the
“ creature more than, or besides, the Crea-
“ tor; such wicked idolaters he declares to
“ be without excuse, given up unto vile
“ affections, to a reprobate mind, being
“ filled with all unrighteousness. He that
“ judges, says he, and he that is judged,
“ both do the same thing; but we are sure,
“ that the judgment of God is according to
“ truth, against them which commit such
“ things, who will render to every man ac-
“ cording to his deeds; to them, who, by
“ patient continuance in well-doing, seek
“ for glory, and honor, and immortality,
“ eternal life; but unto them that are con-
“ tentious,

“tentious, and do not obey the truth, but
 “obey unrighteousness, indignation and
 “wrath, tribulation and anguish upon
 “every soul of man that doth evil, of the
 “Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”

Impiety, and prophaneſs, and idolatry, and
 all manner of vice and wickedneſs, are not
 only inconfiſtent with the revealed will of
 God, but with all that is known and ma-
 niſeſt, by the light of nature, “concerning
 “the eternal power and Godhead: the in-
 “viſible things, which from the creation
 “of the world are clearly ſeen, being un-
 “derſtood by the things that are made.”

All men have a ſenſe of right and wrong;
 they are all moral agents, and, as ſuch, are
 properly diſtinguiſhed from all other ani-
 mals. They, the moſt abandoned, who deny
 the ſacred power and influence of religion,
 may eaſily be proved to be the ſlaves of ſu-
 perſtition: the dread and apprehenſion of
 ſome unforeſeen evil will ever haunt their

disturbed minds; and the just sentence passed on them by their consciences within convince them, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, that they are accountable for all their actions.

They who have been educated in the law of God, and yet offend in opposition to the clearest information, and most powerful and persuasive motives, are of all men the most unpardonable; but “since all have the work
“ of the law written in their hearts, their
“ conscience also bearing witness, and their
“ thoughts accusing, or excusing one another; therefore as many as have sinned
“ without law shall also perish without law;
“ and as many as have sinned in the law
“ shall be judged by the law; for not the
“ hearers of the law are just before God, but
“ the doers of the law shall be justified.”

The difference is not so very great between man and man, as that one shall be a moral and religious being, and another have

no capacity for religion or virtue. Different modes of thinking and acting, all the disguises, and contrivances, and pretences of some men, will no more prove their minds to have been formed without the distinguishing characteristic of human beings, than the variety of dress and motion can prove them to be of another tribe of animals. Both may be extravagant, and lead to a suspicion of the soundness of their understandings; their wisdom may be called in question, their prudence arraigned; but then all the remarks and all the censures, that are usually made upon follies of this sort, suppose them capable of doing better; and it can never seriously be maintained, that mankind shall be questioned for their conduct and behavior in trifles; but that in affairs of the utmost importance, in matters of religion and virtue, in the faithful discharge of their duties to God and man, they shall not be accountable at all.

We may form a tolerable judgment of the powers and capacities of the human mind from what passes within ourselves. All men have like properties and powers, like passions and appetites, which differ only in degrees of strength, and the manner of conducting them; for without culture the best powers of the mind may be greatly debased; and the passions and appetites prove very riotous, if not kept under proper discipline, and the government of good laws. But as “we are all men of like passions,” and all make use of such terms as true and false, right and wrong, good and bad, how can it be made a question, whether all are not accountable for all their actions? Why are some called honest, others dishonest, some worthy, others unworthy, some glorious, others inglorious, if there be no essential difference between right and wrong, between what is done with propriety or fitness, and the perpetration of those enormous and unnatural vices, those things which, the great apostle of the gentiles says, “are not convenient.”

Conscience

Conscience assures every man, that he must account for his conduct. Conscience beareth witness for or against him; and in our thoughts we all accuse or excuse one another; and thereby acknowledge, that all are accountable for their behavior. He who gave us this witness, he who made us religious beings, and enabled us to discover his sovereignty, will certainly take account of our actions, and recompense us according to our works. It is not to be imagined, that men who are accountable should never be made to account for their conduct. No; the great Governor of the universe, who has made them lords of the creation, by giving them power over every living thing, will strictly examine into their conduct, and make them account for the exercise of that power, and the use and abuse of the several talents with which he has intrusted them.

To most other animals man is, as it were, himself a deity; they know no superior being, they owe their support to him, and he

takes away their life when he pleases. Human laws interfere but little with his dominion over the brute creation. In this respect he is absolute; and the poor animals must submit to all the burdens, and pains, and tortures he may choose to inflict upon them. But surely we shall be made to account for all undue severities practised upon those useful creatures, to him who put them in subjection under us. Indeed we account for a very small part of our actions here on earth. If a man observe the principal laws of the society he lives in, he may escape punishment, and pass for a just man, and yet have many grievous failings to lament. He may be unmerciful to his beast, uncharitable to the poor, of an unforgiving disposition, bearing hatred and envy, instead of love to his neighbor; he may be oppressive, and by oppression thrive; his avarice may make him ingenious in distressing others; he may have health as well as riches to boast, and live to see many days: whilst, on the other hand, the good man's days may be few and evil;
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he may suffer from poverty and want, from contempt, detraction, slander, insolence; he may groan under the rack of diseases, or pine away under the calamities and disappointments of this world; he may be falsely accused, and, like the Saviour of the world, suffer for offences he never committed. Is therefore the good man finally to lose his reward, or the wicked for ever to escape punishment? Are all men accountable, and are none to account for their conduct? Heaven forbid! “God is not unrighteous
“to forget your work and labor of love*.”
“God is not unrighteous who taketh vengeance; for then how shall God judge the
“world†?” Neither the laws of society, nor the general course of God’s providence, answer the purpose of a strict and impartial distribution of justice. It is sufficient for the former, if men can be kept together in any tolerable order; and we, who expect a judgment to come, know, that all the seem-

* Heb. vi. 10.

† Rom. iii. 5, 6.

ing inequalities of Providence in this world will be adjusted in the next. The government of the world, no more than the government of any particular society, requires adequate and immediate punishments to be inflicted for every moral offence, but the justice of God will hereafter be made manifest unto all, when “every man shall receive according to his works.” The good man’s best hope is heaven; and the sinner’s greatest dread, whatever he may pretend to the contrary, is a future state of retribution. Nothing, therefore, can be more cruel and discouraging to the good or more encouraging to the bad, than an attempt to weaken the evidences for a future state.

Politicians may vainly flatter themselves that they alone govern the world, and that all the good and evil in it is entirely owing to their schemes; when, God knows, the best attempts of the best of men would avail but little, without the influence of religion. Nor will the history of mankind suffer us to
doubt,

doubt, that the ambitious of rule have not always been the best friends to mankind, and patrons of virtue; on the contrary, they have too often served themselves at the expence of society; and not only neglected, but opposed the public good; whereas religious principles, the love of God, a delight in his laws, and the dread of offending him, will keep men in some tolerable order, even when human laws are either deficient, or not enforced. Religion is the foundation of law and society. The man, therefore, who opposes the doctrine of a future state, without which all human efforts to support society and establish laws would be vain, is an enemy to the present, as well as future happiness of men. The only consolation to the afflicted, who despair of relief in this world, the great support of innocence and virtue under trial, the expectation of the just, and a ray of hope in the pangs of death, is immortality.

Whatever

Whatever some bad men, enemies to human kind by being the enemies of religion, may have said, the general sense of mankind has ever been, that the mind will continue when the body is dissolved. In this life the body is at rest, when the mind is most intent and busy; and, therefore, the mind may be most active, when detached from that incumbrance, which, as an earthly tabernacle, might be no longer necessary to it, than whilst it continues an inhabitant of the earth.

Thus have the wisest men reasoned in ancient times. And to the general voice of human nature, in favor of another world, in which wisdom, and virtue, and happiness may take place of folly, vice, and misery in this, nothing is opposed, except the bold assertions of a few hardy writers. But can it admit of debate, whether we are to take our sentiments of human nature, and the powers of the mind from such men as these, or from all the rest of mankind?

Men

Men are certainly religious beings, such as God hath honored with the great privilege of knowing him, and of seeking him, and of appealing to him in prayer, and of believing, that he is a “rewarder of them who seek him diligently.”

We should not have been endued with a capacity for immortality, and an earnest expectation, or, as it is otherwise expressed, a longing after immortality, any more than other animals, if we had not been the objects of it. No being is ever furnished with desires, for the gratification of which there are no suitable objects. But man is influenced by the apprehensions of another world, in which the mind may meet with that ultimate satisfaction and *chief good*, which it has in vain sought for in this.

But if the arguments for our existence, after what is called death, had not been so strong as they really are, the light that is thrown upon this subject by the gospel of Jesus

Jefus fhould convince all men, who have ears to hear, of the truth of a refurrection from the dead, as he himfelf did actually arife. And hence it appears, that we have not only the evidence of reafon, but of fact, for an exiftence after death. If the apoftles had not feen the Lord of life after his crucifixion, death, and burial, they would not have undergone the fatigues and torments, which they certainly did, in the confirmation of it. Their hiftory, their characters, their conduct, oblige us to believe what they faid, and fealed with their blood. Since therefore it is certain, that we muft rife again, and all appear “ before the judgment “ feat of Chrift, that every one may re- “ ceive the things done in his body, ac- “ cording to that he hath done, whether it “ be good or bad *,” let us avoid contention and difobedience to the truth and to righteoufnefs, which produce indignation

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

and wrath; and let us seek for glory and immortality “ by a patient continuance in “ well doing,” expecting the reward, which is eternal life.

Fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

W H E N the children of Israel had been so wicked as to reject the prophet Samuel, their leader, “ who had hearkened unto the voice of the people, “ in all that they had said unto him: “ who had walked before them from his youth, and who, as they themselves could not but own, had never oppressed them, nor taken any man’s silver:” what the miserable people, who had been thus long neglected and even miraculously delivered

and wrath; and let us seek for glory and immortality, by a patient continuance in "well doing," expecting the reward, which is eternal life.

Let us not be overcome by the violence of reason, but of fact, let us be convinced after death. If the apostles had seen the Lord of life after his crucifixion, death, and burial, they would not have undergone the fatigues and torments, which they certainly did, in the confirmation of their history. Their characters, their conduct, obliges us to believe what they say, and stand with their blood. Since therefore it is certain, that we must rise again, and all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive his reward according to his body, according to what he hath done; whether it be good or evil. Let us avoid contention, and strive to the truth and to righteousness, which produce indignation.

S E R M O N XI.

I SAMUEL xii. 24.

*Fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with
all your heart: for consider how great
things he hath done for you.*

WHEN the children of Israel had
been so wicked as to reject the
prophet Samuel, their leader, “ who had
“ hearkened unto the voice of the people,
“ in all that they had said unto him ;
“ who had walked before them from his
“ youth, and who, as they themselves
“ could not but own, had never defrauded
“ nor oppressed them, nor taken ought of
“ any man’s hand ;” when this ungrateful
people, who had been favored with many
signal and even miraculous deliverances out

M

of

of the hands of their enemies, under their great leaders, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephtha, Samuel, had shewn themselves insensible of “all the
 “righteous acts of the Lord, which he
 “had done to them, and to their fathers;” when they had, to use the words of the Lord to Samuel, “rejected even God
 “himself, that he should not reign over
 “them*;” when they had done all this wickedness, and were also “had in abo-
 “mination with the Philistines,” who are represented “as the sand, which is on the
 “sea-shore in multitude †,” the good old prophet forbids the people to be afraid, even at a time, when the Lord had signified his power and presence by sending rain and thunder in the day of wheat harvest.
 “The people said unto Samuel, pray for
 “thy servants unto the Lord thy God,
 “that we die not. And Samuel said unto

* 1 Sam. viii. 7.

† 1 Sam. xiii. 4, 5.

“ the people, fear not.” They were to acknowledge the presence of God in his works, and his extraordinary power in the thunders of that day ; and, by their obedience to his commandments, were to engage his favor and protection. They were to know no other fear, than that which religion inspires, the fear of offending God by their disobedience. “ If ye will fear the
 “ Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice,
 “ and not rebel against the commandments
 “ of the Lord, then shall both ye, and also
 “ the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God :
 “ but if ye will not obey the voice of the
 “ Lord, but rebel against the command-
 “ ment of the Lord, then shall the hand of
 “ the Lord be against you. If ye shall still
 “ do wickedly, ye shall be consumed.”

Nothing subjects men so much to that cowardly passion, fear, as their own vices, which deprive them of their native strength and valor, and fit them for destruction. All

the proud cities of the East, in Babylonia*, in Egypt, in Syria, and Greece, so renowned of old for their grandeur and magnificence, were the prey of their own wickedness. All empires, states, and kingdoms owe their rise and progress to their virtues, their fall and ruin to their vices.

When men are once inclined to be wicked, they degenerate so fast, that, if the earliest and most effectual means are not instantly applied to restore them to a sound state, they will soon become too corrupt for any power, without the interposition of Heaven, to save them.

Men too easily corrupt one another; and evil example is found to work more powerfully to make men bad, than good ex-

* “Babylon, Chaldaicarum gentium caput, diu summam claritatem obtinuit in toto orbe, propter quam reliqua pars Mesopotamiæ, Assyriæque, Babylonia appellata est.” Plin. l. vi. c. 26.

ample to make them virtuous. They encourage one another by uniting in the same wicked practices, and justify themselves by the examples of others; thinking it a sufficient proof of their innocence, that they are not singular in iniquity, doing no more than others have done. This is a common excuse for no uncommon vices. Hence shame, and modesty, and a decent pride lose their influence, and those vices, against which they protected men, become almost general. Thus the natural guards to virtue being removed, vice rushes in like a torrent, and overthrows all order and good government.

There are rules by which every action should be tried. Reason and religion are much safer guides than the practices of others, which are often wrong, and may mislead, instead of directing us with certainty in the proper paths we should pursue. All men have a law and a judge within themselves, their reason and their

conscience, “ which shew the work of the
“ law written in their hearts, their con-
“ science bearing witness, and their
“ thoughts in the mean while accusing,
“ or else excusing one another *.” If in-
stead of appealing to the rule of right rea-
son, to the law and the prophets, men will
search abroad for excuses, and regulate
their conduct by the practices of others,
there is nothing so obscene, malevolent, or
atrocious, which they will not perpetrate.
And when men become extremely wicked,
their vices will lead them to dispute,
whether they can be religious beings and
objects of future rewards and punish-
ments, or not.

All men wish for the continuance of
their being, if they may be happy. The
good can have no reason to doubt their
being happy, when-ever and where-ever

* Rom. ii. 15.

removed: the wicked, conscious of their demerits, deny that retribution they have so much reason to dread. These hopes and fears afford great encouragement to men to do what is right and just, and deter them from committing those things, which they know will not be approved by him, who has made them accountable for the use of their faculties and powers. Society therefore has not a worse enemy than the man, who opposes religion. To reform a corrupt scheme of worship is honorable and praiseworthy; but to run down all religion, or, by opposing the best, make way for the return of a superstition that persecutes, is madness and folly, as well as wickedness and impiety.

Society and law presuppose religion; they acknowledge it to be their foundation and support. Men are not to be governed but by religion, and become monsters without it. It is essential to the nature of man, and is what properly distinguishes him

from all other animals. The man therefore, who pretends to have no religion, is an enemy to his species, to society, and law, and government, and ranks himself with the beasts that perish. He that opposes one particular form of government may find a state somewhere or other to his mind, and become a good citizen; but the man who publicly opposes all religion is alike an enemy to all societies or governments, and must be a bad citizen, where-ever he is found. Such a one is ever to be dreaded, but more in times of general depravity and distress, than in times of tranquillity, or in an age of public virtue. Religion makes men brave. The good and pious have nothing to fear, and become gainers by the loss of life. They know it is better for them to die, and be with the Lord, than to continue in the flesh. The happiness which they are to inherit hereafter, is so far superior to the perishing enjoyments of this short life, that all who are properly influenced by the pious hopes of heaven, will look upon death, in
any

any form or shape, as the means only of escaping from a world of misery to everlasting happiness: and if it is to be considered as an enemy, it is such a one as the good man will not cowardly avoid. It is, at the worst, no other than a short and swift passage into a better state, wherein are collected all the spirits of those who have been good and excellent on earth, ever since the creation of it. But if these hopes of happiness are not powerful enough to subdue the fears of death, the greater dread of offending him, who has power to punish the soul, and who has declared, he will make a proper distinction between the good and bad, will deter all men, who are so wise as to fear the Lord, from doing what they know he will not approve. Death ceases to be terrible, when compared with the torments of the damned; and who is he that would purchase the continuance of his life, at the hazard of destroying his soul? The wicked man, indeed, has reason to be afraid, his own conscience condemning him; but the good man, being

being always ready to account for his conduct, will not fear what man can do unto him, nor greatly dread any commotions or disturbances whatever. Though the Lord should thunder in the day of harvest, though the waters should lift up their heads, and the foundations of the earth be shaken, he is safe in his own integrity, and relies on him, whose faithful servant he has always been, and who therefore will not forsake him. Providence will always protect the good and virtuous; they have nothing to fear; whatever happens in this perishable world, they have an asylum in heaven.

If religion could boast no other advantage than this, that it makes men brave, it would deserve the protection and encouragement of all, who have that passion or laudable partiality which is distinguished by being called the love of country.

States and empires, as they consist of men, partake of human passions, and from envy,
jealousy,

jealousy, or rage, proceed to acts of violence and war. If the Jews had not defended themselves against those idolatrous nations, which made war upon them, the true name of God would not have been left in the world. Whenever they were good and pious; whenever they served the Lord, he is said to have led forth their armies, to have fought their battles: and consequently they were victorious. But when they became idolaters; “ when they forsook the Lord, and served “ Baal and Ashtaroth, he then delivered “ them into the hands of the spoilers, that “ spoiled them, and he sold them into the “ hands of their enemies round about, so “ that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they “ went out, the hand of the Lord was “ against them for evil, as the Lord had “ said, and had sworn *.” As it was with them, so is it with every other nation, in

* Judges ii. 13, 14, 15.

which

which the Lord has been pleased to put his name.

If we consider the religious and civil advantages which we ourselves possess, above other states and kingdoms, and how often we have been delivered from tyranny, and superstition, and invasion, our gratitude to God, the author of these inestimable blessings, should preserve us from great and national offences. What right, what hopes can we flatter ourselves with of the perpetuity of these divine favors, if we cease to deserve them, if we neglect the proper means of supporting ourselves in the possession of them, and act in a manner that is destructive of them? If we are corrupt and wicked, of what force or value is any religion to us, or how can we continue to be free? To be the slaves of corruption and venality is the worst species of slavery; and to be free from the foul contagion of sin and wickedness, the truest liberty. It is therefore in our own power to be free by being honest.

True

True Christian liberty is deliverance from sin, and from death, which is the consequence of sin. The practice of sin is slavery; but Christ hath made us free. To worship God in spirit and in truth, to be obedient to the commands of Jesus Christ, who redeemed us, and to the laws of the society to which we belong, and which protect us in our lives, and liberties, and fortunes, are the only means of delivering us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And he who contends for any other species of liberty is either a knave or a madman.

Under so good and gracious a sovereign, under so mild a government as this land is at this time blessed with, if we are not the best and bravest, we must be the most ungrateful or insensible of men. If we are become supine and negligent from ease and tranquillity, and the use of the protestant religion, it is time to awaken from these slumbers, lest we be found unworthy of a
longer

longer possession, and prove too weak and enervated to defend them. Nothing will cure this lethargy, and rouse us to a proper sense of these advantages, and of our duty to secure them to ourselves and our posterity, so soon as a view and consideration of the calamities that must attend the want of them. Our fathers felt the severities and oppression inflicted on them by superstitious men and tyrants; and by submitting to be burnt alive procured for us, their posterity, that freedom which we now, and God grant we and our descendents may for ever enjoy. It is easier to preserve than to acquire such blessings. We are yet free and happy, and may continue so, if we will be advised by Samuel: “turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside; for then would ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain*.” To the Jews were

* 1 Samuel xii. 20, 21.

committed the oracles of God; to them were the promises made. And though their number was not great, if compared with the idolaters, who often came against them to destroy them, they had nothing to fear but their own vices. They were always conquerors, whilst they served the Lord with all their heart, but when they turned aside from following the Lord; when they became idolaters, and worshipped vanities, material objects of stone, or brass, or wood, which could not profit, they were delivered up to their enemies. If the children of Israel forsook the living God, and worshipped these inanimate, and therefore vain things, they were given up for a time to their enemies, till repentance took place of disobedience, and then they were restored: for, says the prophet, “the Lord will not
“ forsake his people, for his great name’s
“ sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to
“ make you his people*.”

* 1 Samuel xii. 22.

Ancient Judea may in many respects be compared with this land. The Jews could not be more averse to idolatry than ourselves; and perhaps the support of the protestant interest in the world depends as much upon the welfare of this island, as the worship of the true God did once upon the preservation of the house of Israel. Idolaters, however powerful or numerous, may threaten your destruction in vain, whilst you continue the servants of him who never forsook his people, till he was forsaken by them. We should not presume to value ourselves upon the mere name of Protestants, if we fail in the discharge of our civil and religious duties. The Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham; but says our Saviour, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Let us not by our own unworthiness deprive ourselves and our descendents of those favors, which God has been pleased to bestow upon us, for his great name's sake, and for the piety and virtues of our
ancef-

ancestors. Let us not like those, who were anciently distinguished as the peculiar people of God, be scattered among the nations, and become the outcasts of mankind. Let us rather shew, by our attention and adherence to all that is good and honest, that we have no other fear, than that of offending heaven by our crimes; and this religious fear, which is said to be the beginning of wisdom, will protect us against all evils. The Lord himself will then be on our side; and if we fall, it will be under his banner and in his service, who is able to recompense us above all that we can deserve or suffer. If we live, we shall live with glory; and whenever we die, we shall have fulfilled the engagement made at our baptism, “that
 “we should continue Christ’s faithful sol-
 “diers and servants unto our lives end.”

For none of us, says the great apostle of the Gentiles, liveth “to himself, and no
 “man dieth to himself. For whether we
 “live, we live unto the Lord; and whe-
 “ther we die, we die unto the Lord;

N

“whether

“ whether we live therefore or die, we are
“ the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both
“ died, and rose, and revived, that he
“ might be Lord both of the dead and
“ living*.”

Let us henceforth bid adieu to sin and the weakness it occasions. Let us not be dejected, as men without hope, but rely on the mercies of God, who will readily forgive us all that is past, if we resolve to offend no more. Let us shew the sincerity of our repentance, by returning to every part of our duty, as Christian Protestants, for the rest of our lives. Let us be of one mind, and one heart to serve God and our country; and let us pray to God for it in the words of the royal Psalmist: “ the Lord hear thee in the day of
“ trouble; the name of the God of Jacob
“ defend thee; send thee help from the
“ sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of

* Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

“ Zion.

“ Zion. Remember all thy offerings.
 “ Grant thee according to thine own
 “ heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. We
 “ will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the
 “ name of our God we will set up our
 “ banners. The Lord fulfil all thy peti-
 “ tions *.” Amen.

* Psalm xx. 1—5.

S E R M O N XII,

JEREMIAH X. 23.

*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not
in himself: it is not in man that walketh
to direct his steps.*

TH E government of the world is in
the hands of him who made it.
“ How unsearchable are his judgments,
“ and his ways past finding out*! For as
“ the heavens are higher than the earth,
“ so are my ways higher than your ways,
“ and my thoughts than your thoughts,
“ saith the Lord †. The way of man is
“ not in himself; he cannot direct his
“ steps;” he cannot act, he cannot stir
without him, in whom “ we live, and move,
“ and have our being ‡.”

* Rom. xi. 33. † Isaiah lv. 9. ‡ Acts xvii. 28.

In the course of divine Providence infinite circumstances arise, by which the steps of men are directed to very different ways; and hence appears the reasonableness of that address in the Lord's prayer, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Not that God tempteth man. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed *." He has passions, and appetites within, and is very liable to err; and abroad he may meet with such temptations and seducements, as will force him to confess, that "the way of man is not in himself," and to pray, that he may be delivered from evil, and not led into temptation.

If the world is not so bad as some have represented it, nor men so wicked as some

* James i. 13, 14.

of the species have reported them; if virtue is not only amiable in itself, but approved by all; if industry and œconomy are the parents of independency and opulence; if these things are really so, whence is it, that the virtuous and wise shall sometimes be depressed, and they, who have no extraordinary pretensions to either wisdom or virtue, succeed to every thing their vain or ambitious hearts lead them to aspire after?

Neither wisdom nor virtue can control every circumstance, that may arise, in such a world as this, to disappoint the views and expectations of an honest man. All the activity, and fortitude, and care, and circumspection of the best of those who mean well, may be, and often are frustrated by a thousand accidents, no less than by the designs of those, who act from contrary motives, and have very different ends in view.

How easy is it for the many to counteract the honest endeavours of the few? how improbable the success of any against a great superiority of numbers? Every man who is not carried along with the stream, but resists it, will be over-powered and borne down. And if he does not oppose, but submits to the current, he must go wheresoever it drives. For though, in some sense, we may be said to make our own fortunes, it is not where, nor how we please. Much depends upon favorable incidents, as much upon the good-will of others. The former is absolutely out of our power; and, with all proper diligence and compliance, we cannot always be sure of the latter.

We may mistake our own sphere or vortex; and find every event, as unprosperous as unnatural, by attempting to move in a superior orb. This is an early and a common error. The inexperience and vanity of youth, upheld by the fondness and flattery

of some about us ; the eagerness with which we rush into life, with the false notions we have of it, and of ourselves, will account for many disappointments. Happy they who owe the discovery of these errors to their own good sense and feeling, and who become wise from their own experience ; but still more happy they who avail themselves of the experience of others ; whose improved knowledge and advice may serve them as a clue to guide them through the labyrinth of life.

How difficult, therefore, must it be to emerge from all the evils that surround us, and to prosper in spite of every accident, the designs of other men who may oppose us, and, what is worse than all, ourselves, our own unlucky contrivances ! Accidents may be equal, or as often with as against us. Circumstances will some time or other be favorable. The malice of an open enemy may easily be avoided. If some men oppose us, others will support us. The friend may
be

be more than a balance for the enemy. But our own mistakes are rarely seen, more rarely acknowledged. We are often blind to those imperfections in ourselves, which we can very readily perceive in others. If the friend informs us of them, his friendship becomes suspected by the discovery, which, in every other person, is imputed to malice or envy.

Thus we see, that the fluctuating affairs of the world, which constitute those accidents that are sometimes favorable, and more frequently adverse, the smiles and frowns of fortune, the service and disservice of other men, with our own right or wrong pursuits, all operate to raise or depress us.

It is ridiculous to blame our stars for unlucky events, which are the natural consequences of our own indiscretion. If we mistake our class and character, we shall be despised by all, by those above us, amongst whom we would impertinently figure, as well as by our equals and inferiors.

If

If we are not the dupes of ambition and pride, but submit to all other passions, and instead of curbing them with the proper restraints of reason, religion, and law, suffer them to run away with us, without any regard to consequences, “not weighing
“well the end;” if we will not make use of our own reason, nor be directed by the good sense and experience of others, we must be left to the sense of feeling, the only ground, on which our best friends can form any hopes of our being restored to the use of those other senses and faculties, which distinguish men from brutes.

But if we are not the immediate authors of our own misfortunes, it will rarely happen, that the man, who has not by some act or other made enemies, will be persecuted by them, or not find friends attached to him on account of his innocence, both able and willing to support him against all their attacks.

But

But if the accidents of life are against him; if he is crossed in all his views by the perpetual occurrence of unfavourable circumstances, which may sometimes be the fate of a luckless man, he should shew himself as superior to these disappointments as to envy, if he had been an object of it. What is in the power of man he should do to improve and advance himself, his friends, and dependents; and, having done all, rest as one conscious, that he has discharged his duty to himself and others, without repining at whatever was not in his power to prevent or procure. Consequences, it is true, are to be regarded; some end is to be proposed in all we do: but as events, however reasonable in expectation, are not absolutely in our power to obtain by action; if men are to live by rule; if they are to proceed in all they do upon right principles; if they are no longer to be justified than they are influenced by reason; let the event turn out as it may, they should do their duty. That we cannot be sure of success in our attempts

tempts is no just excuse for negligence and inactivity. Consequences may serve as motives to incite us to act; but neither the uncertainty of such events as are prosperous, nor the dread of such as may be fatal, will deter the truly brave and virtuous from whatever a sense of duty may require them to attempt. What is right should therefore be done, because it is right, and the event left out of question.

To proceed in every action and inquiry upon principles of truth and honor, to do our duty under every relation, is to be supremely virtuous. And nothing can be greater, and more admirable in man, than to shew himself superior to misfortunes. He who is actuated by the truest piety and heroism of a christian is unmoved by all that can happen to him here, he depends upon the infinite goodness of that great Being, who made him what he is, who stationed him here, who put a law into his heart, who is himself the most awful ob-
ject

ject of his thoughts, who in the course of
 his divine providence sometimes honors the
 best of human kind with extraordinary tri-
 als of their virtue; upon him alone he de-
 pends for his reward, which must be as cer-
 tain as are the moral attributes, the justice,
 and wisdom, and goodness of God, and his
 relation to man, as the creator, preserver,
 king, and father of us all. “ O Lord, I
 “ know that the way of man is not in
 “ himself: it is not in man that walketh
 “ to direct his steps.” He may employ his
 talents; he may exert all his powers, such
 as they are, and not be able to control, or
 to command events. He may throw the
 lot, but the disposal thereof, the use and
 direction of the free actions of men, for
 the good and orderly government of the
 world, is according to the will of him who
 made, and who governs it. Hence it is, that
 the humble are sometimes exalted, and the
 mighty brought low; that the same means,
 at different times, shall be directed so as to
 produce contrary effects, and what was in-
 tended

tended as the destruction of other prove fatal to ourselves. He that digs a pit for another may fall into it himself: his own snare may be his own destruction.

Let us not, therefore, despair as men without hope. Whatever misfortunes happen to us, in this transient state of existence, let us take comfort from the glorious prospect of eternal happiness hereafter. Let us set such a value upon the good things of this life, as may inspire us with industry, and application, and gratitude. Let us desire them for the sake of him who made both them and us; who hath been so liberal to his creatures, however otherwise they have been to one another, as “with
“ open hand to satisfy the desire of every
“ living thing *.” But let not this desire of life and all that belongs to it exceed the real value of it. All here is mortal, all is perishable. The possession of those everlasting

* Psalm cxlv. 16.

habitations, which we hereafter expect, is infinitely preferable to what endures for a short season only, and is found by every one to be unsatisfactory, and by most of us to be full of disappointments. There is no such state as uninterrupted happiness in this world. He who is not an object of pity is often an object of envy, from appearances more than the real state of his mind. The most elevated situation will not protect the heart from anxious and bitter sensations. And the man, who finds his services or his merit slighted, who pines away under disappointment, and thinks himself of all men to be most deserving of pity and compassion, may be as happy as he who has neglected him. He who is an object of pity may also be an object of our best affections, and derive that comfort from it, which ought to be superior to undeserved success. A good character in any station of life will make a man dear to his friends, and valuable to society. It is to be preserved at the expence of life, for life is of no real value without it. Wealth and titles
are

are circumstances which excite admiration, and create dependents and followers; but love and friendship, which are the most amiable qualities, and without which there can be no true happiness or real enjoyment, are natives of the heart, and arise from good dispositions in the mind. We cannot all be rich, or great; but we may deserve and acquire a good name, which, in the estimation of the royal Preacher, is “better than precious ointment*,” and “rather to be chosen than great riches†.”

That merit is neglected is a common complaint: it were well if real merit were as common as the complaint, that it is not regarded. If there be so much merit in the world, it is not to be wondered at, if some of it should be suffered to remain upon hand. The intrinsic value may be the same, but plenty makes all things cheap. Some of us may perhaps over-rate our merit, or we

* Eccles. vii. 1.

† Proverbs xxii. 1.

may judge so ill of events, as to consider every disappointment as an act of injustice. This is folly; to avoid the imputation of which, it will be best not to be loud in our complaints; for real merit is allied to modesty, and the voice of a friend in these cases is better heard than our own. If merit does not succeed, it should be considered, that men are not always disinterested enough to give it the preference. They may not be the best judges of such pretensions as merit gives. They may look upon it as a bold intruder. Let it be remembered, that the man who has no merit is under the highest obligation to him who serves him; whereas the man of merit may presume, that the obligation lies on the other side, and that he ought to be served: but he who is to confer the benefit may choose rather to create an obligation in others, than acknowledge one in himself. Some comfort may be derived from hence to every man who shall think himself neglected, that the hardship is not peculiar to him, or his profession.

No

No man should suppose himself equal to all the chances and changes of things, “the infinite doings of the world,” but wait with patience for the turning up of such circumstances as may be favorable. We are all to strive after perfection, and to do all the good we can, in whatever sphere of life we may be permitted to act, without resenting or repining; that is, without adding to the neglect and unkindness of others by tormenting ourselves. And if, besides disappointments in life, it should please God, that we should be visited with other afflictions and infirmities, let us consider them as trials of humility, patience, and resignation to divine Providence; and let us approve ourselves in the practice of these great virtues, and “wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another*.” Let us turn “from idols to serve the living and

* Gal. v. 5. 26.

“ true God. And wait for his son from
 “ heaven, whom he raised from the dead,
 “ even Jesus, who delivered us from the
 “ wrath to come †.”

† Thess. i. 9, 10.

S E R M O N XIII.

MATTHEW xvi. 18.

*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will
build my church; and the gates of hell
shall not prevail against it.*

IF we consider the purity and simplicity
of the gospel age, the doctrines and
manners of our Lord and his disciples; and
compare them with the corrupt state of the
modern church of Rome, the strange and
intricate tenets it maintains, polluted with
vain philosophy and the rudiments of the
world, the power it has usurped over the
laws of God, and the minds and bodies of
men; instead of supposing them to be one
and the same, we cannot but conclude them
to be as contrary and opposite to one

another, as humility and pride, truth and error, mercy and cruelty, vice and virtue, sin and sanctity, pure religion and idolatry, light and darkness, Christ and antichrist.

What can be more absurd and preposterous, than the claims of the pope to all that he possesses, in right of his succession to St. Peter! The one a poor fisherman in bonds, whose greatest glory was that of being a preacher of righteousness, and a converter of Jew and Gentile to the faith of Christ, his master. The other proud and despotic beyond all other princes in the world, pretending to a power over them and their titles, to dispose of their crowns and to dispense with the faith and allegiance of their subjects. Surely such usurpation and treachery could never have been intended by our Saviour, when he made use of this figurative expression, in speaking to St. Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*.”

* Matt. xvi. 19.

What pretence there is for raising such an amazing structure of usurped powers, impieties, and corruptions upon this rock, will easily be discovered, if we consider the proper import of the words of Christ to his apostle Peter.

“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock
“I will build my church.”

Simon, afterwards called Cephas, or Peter, which is, by interpretation a rock, was brother to Andrew, and one of the first disciples of Jesus, who gave him that name, which well corresponds with the character of the man, who was ever foremost in word and action to serve his master, and promote his cause. It was this disciple, who “walked
“on the water to go to Jesus*.” It was he, who “drew his sword, and struck a servant
“of the high priest, and smote off his ear.” When “all the disciples forsook Jesus and

* Matt. xiv. 29.

“ fled, Peter followed him, though afar
 “ off, unto the high priest’s palace *.”

When the women reported what they had
 seen and heard, concerning the resurrection
 of Jesus, unto the apostles, “ then arose
 “ Peter and ran unto the sepulchre †.” And
 “ the third time that Jesus shewed himself
 “ to his disciples, after that he was risen
 “ from the dead, the disciple whom Jesus
 “ loved saith unto Peter, it is the Lord.
 “ Now when Simon Peter heard that it
 “ was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat
 “ unto him, and cast himself into the sea ‡.”

He was a hardy, forward, resolute, good
 man. But with all his firmness he had his
 failings ; and sometimes his forward dispo-
 sition betrayed him into error. He pre-
 sumed to rebuke his master for declaring
 what should happen to him, when he went
 up the last time to Jerusalem, that he
 should suffer many things, be killed, and
 raised again on the third day. “ Peter took

* Matt. xxvi. 51. 56. 58.

† Luke xxiv. 12.

‡ John xxi. 14 and 7.

“ him,

“ him, and began to rebuke him, saying,
 “ be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not
 “ be unto thee.” Which occasioned this
 just reproof from our Saviour, who turned
 and said to Peter, “ get thee behind me,
 “ Satan, or my adversary, thou art an of-
 “ fence unto me; for thou favourest not
 “ the things that be of God, but those
 “ that be of men*.” If he followed our
 Saviour to his trial, it was afar off; and
 when questioned concerning his master,
 for whom he had said he was ready to die,
 he denied with oaths that he knew him.
 Though he was ready and willing to meet
 his master in the sea, his faith was not
 strong enough to keep him from the fear
 of sinking. “ He cried, Lord, save me.
 “ And immediately Jesus stretched forth
 “ his hand, and caught him, and said unto
 “ him, O thou of little faith, wherefore
 “ didst thou doubt †?” Is this a proof of
 the primacy of Peter? this the boasted su-
 periority of one disciple over the rest? He

* Matt. xvi. 22, 23.

† Matt. xiv. 30, 31.

him-

himself claimed no superiority, nor could he, for all were equal.

The sons of Zebedee contended for priority; it gave offence to the rest of the disciples, “ and Jesus said unto them, the
“ kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship
“ over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.
“ But ye shall not be so: but he that is
“ greatest amongst you, let him be as the
“ younger; and he that is chief, as he that
“ doth serve*.”

John was the favorite disciple; he leaned upon the bosom of Jesus; to him our Lord committed the care of his mother, when he said unto her, at the time of his crucifixion,
“ woman, behold thy son †.” And just before his ascension, after he had signified to Peter by what death he should die,
“ Peter turning about, and seeing the

* Luke xxii. 25, 26.

† John xix. 26.

“ dif-

“disciple whom Jesus loved following,
 “who also leaned on his breast at supper,
 “faith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this
 “man do? Jesus faith unto him, if I will
 “that he tarry till I come, what is that to
 “thee*?” He survived Peter and the rest
 of the apostles. Is not this as much, if not
 more, in favour of the primacy of John,
 than of Peter? And how absurd it must be
 to suppose this beloved evangelist under sub-
 jection to a bishop of Rome, may be left
 to any man, who is not a bigotted Papist,
 to determine.

If Peter was an apostle of the Gentiles,
 so was Paul; and as great in his sufferings,
 and labors, and writings, as any of the
 apostles. He says himself, “he labored
 “more abundantly than they all†.” “I
 “suppose, says he, I was not a whit be-
 “hind the very chief apostles‡.” In his
 time Christians were divided into parties;

* John xxi. 19—22. † 1 Cor. xv. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 5.
 some

some were of Paul, some of Apollos, others of Cephas or Peter *, who notwithstanding his primacy is here put last of the three. This the apostle calls a carnal strife: for “ who is Paul, and who is Apollos †? is “ Christ divided? was Paul crucified for “ you ‡? He that planteth, and he that “ watereth, being joint laborers, are “ one §.” He then compares himself to a wise master builder, and says of himself, “ I have laid the foundation.” This foundation he immediately declares to be Jesus Christ; for “ other foundation can no man “ lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus the “ Christ ||.” Peter, therefore, is not himself the foundation: he can be no other than a master builder; and such was Paul.

If Peter is a rock or stone, the rest of the apostles were pillars upholding the Christian edifice. St. Paul, naming James first,

* 1 Cor. i. 12.

† Chap. iii. 5.

‡ Chap. i. 13.

§ Chap. iii. 8.

|| Chap. iii. 11.

says of him, and of Cephas or Peter, and John, that they “seemed to be pillars* :” also that they gave unto himself and Barnabas, “the right hands of fellowship,” and confined themselves to the circumcision, yielding to these two apostles the care and conversion of the Gentile world. After this, finding cause to blame Peter, he “with-
“ stood him to the face.”

Hence it follows, that, whatever meaning is given to these words, “upon this
“ rock I will build my church,” Peter was not more diligent, and did not labor more abundantly in the work of the Lord, than his fellow laborers, James and Paul. The truth is, Peter was the first who published the doctrines concerning Christ and his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in the name of all the apostles, “unto the men of Judea and
“ all that dwelt at Jerusalem †.” And he

* Gal. ii. 9.

† Acts ii. 14.

was afterwards the instrument for receiving the Gentile converts to the Christian faith, as is evident from the account given of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. When, therefore, our Saviour says, “upon this rock I will build my church,” he signified, that Peter should first preach his gospel to the Jews and Gentiles, and begin the conversion of both. The care of the Gentiles he surrendered up to Paul and Barnabas.

But what has this declaration of our Lord to do with the see of Rome, ancient or modern, or any Bishops or Popes whatever? It was entirely personal, appropriated to Peter, bearing allusion to his name, which signifies a rock.

Some indeed have interpreted the rock of Christ; others of the confession of Peter, and not of his person. But these are subterfuges, equally unworthy and unnecessary.

It follows, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” These words do not mean, that the attacks of wicked and malevolent spirits shall be defeated, for, in this as in many other places, hell, indisputably, means the grave, and not the place of the devil and his angels; and, therefore, we may paraphrase the whole passage thus: thou art rightly called Peter or rock, for upon thee will I build or rear my church. Thou shalt begin the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, in order to make a congregation of Christians. Thou indeed art mortal, but the word of God is eternal, and shall prevail and triumph over death.

Can the church of Rome, in its present most corrupt state, be that assembly of Christians, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail? A church, as unlike to primitive Christianity, as the Pope is to an Apostle!

The

The bishop of Rome may, more properly, be called the successor to the Roman emperors, than to Peter, in the city of Rome. He cannot say with Christ, “ my “ kingdom is not of this world :” for, in his prosperity, he has usurped a tyrannical power over all men, sovereigns as well as subjects. He substituted a new power instead of the sword, which had fallen from the hands of the Romans ; and erected an empire as extensive and despotic, by claiming a right to universal obedience, as Christ’s vicar upon earth, because Peter, the rock, had been bishop of Rome ; though it is doubtful, whether that apostle ever was at Rome. He is said to have ordained Clement, who was bishop of Rome. So Paul ordained Timothy at Ephesus, and founded a church there. Polycarp was settled by the Apostles at Smyrna. The churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Corinth, and many other cities, might as well be called apostolical as Rome, having all been founded by the apostles and the bishops of those churches,

churches are, therefore, equally the successors of the apostles with the bishops of Rome.

That any of the apostles of our Lord were bishops is absolutely false. They were of a higher order. “He gave some
“ apostles, and some prophets, and some
“ evangelists, and some pastors and teach-
“ ers *.” There are differences of admi-
“ nistrations, first apostles †.” As such, they were to teach the world, according to their first commission, “go and teach all
“ men.” But bishops were stationary and fixed to their dioceses. They were inferior to the apostles, and appointed by them.

But admitting Peter, the rock, to have been bishop of Rome, what claim or title can his successors have to powers, which the apostles never pretended to? In fact nothing can be more unlike Peter, or any

* Ephes. iv. 11.

† 1 Cor. xii. 5. 28.

one of the apostles, than the pope. He is a motley being, part Pagan, part Christian; but the greatest part of him is Pagan. And as he is, such is his church. Many of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome are well known to have been derived from the heathens. Whilst this pretended successor to the apostle Peter was advancing with hasty strides towards the throne of the emperors, the church over which he presided kept pace with its pastor, and departed as much as himself from true primitive simplicity. And it is one of the strongest evidences for the truth of Christianity, that such corruptions, as have arisen in the Christian church, were foretold by our Lord and his apostles. Who could have imagined that such power, and pride, and tyranny, and superstition, as hath been exercised by the priests of Rome, would ever have been grafted upon the merciful and benevolent doctrines of Jesus? And yet it was foretold, that there should come an apostacy or “a falling
“ away

“away first, and then that man of sin be
 “revealed, the son of perdition, who op-
 “poseth and exalteth himself above all
 “that is called God, or is worshipped; so
 “that he as God sitteth in the temple of
 “God, shewing himself that he is God;
 “even he, whose coming is after the work-
 “ing of satan, with all power, and signs,
 “and lying wonders *.” And again, “the
 “spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter
 “times some shall depart from the faith,
 “giving heed to seducing spirits, and doc-
 “trines of, or concerning, demons, speak-
 “ing lies in hypocrisy, having their con-
 “science seared with an hot iron; for-
 “bidding to marry, and commanding to
 “abstain from meats †.”

Some there were, who, “vainly puffed
 “up by a fleshly mind, would be guilty of
 “worshipping angels, intruding into those
 “things which they had not seen ‡.”

* 2 Thess. ii. 3, &c. † 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. ‡ Col. ii. 18.

ed It is certain, these particular corruptions have prevailed, and still do prevail in that church, which boasts its succession from the apostle Peter, and which, foul as it is, presumes to pass final sentence, without mercy, upon all who are not as corrupt as herself. To wash off the filth, that had been contracted by time, from the mixture of heathen impurities, and the infection of abused power, is scandalized with the reproach of novelty; as if to purify were to destroy, or to return to the good old way, to broach heresy. If nothing is to be admitted for ancient that is much older than the corruptions of Rome, we must submit. But surely it is our duty to go back to the times of the apostles, and to take our doctrines from the scriptures themselves, and tell those who ask us, where was our religion before Luther? that it was where it still is, in our Bible, which they have prudently shut up, as conscious that it too plainly condemns those very corruptions, which the Papists have adopted.

It

It is said of Rome, that “ she is drunk
 “ with the blood of the saints, and with
 “ the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*.” It
 is the same city that is said to have made
 “ merchandise of the souls and bodies of
 “ men †.” Can it be said of these corrup-
 tions, whatever may of the church built by
 Christ, that the gates of hell or of death
 do not prevail where they are? where that
 horrible office of the inquisition, impiously
 called holy, is erected? And, therefore, be-
 cause the gates of hell actually prevail in
 the church of Rome, Protestants are justi-
 fied in their separation. In which they obey
 the “ voice from heaven, saying, come out
 “ of her, my people, that ye be not par-
 “ takers of her sins; and that ye receive
 “ not of her plagues ‡. What agreement
 “ hath the temple of God with idols?
 “ For ye are the temple of the living God;
 “ as God hath said, I will dwell in them,
 “ and walk in them; and I will be their

* Rev. xvii, 6. † Chap. xviii. 13. ‡ Chap. xviii. 4.

“ God, and they shall be my people.
 “ Wherefore come out from among them,
 “ and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and
 “ touch not the unclean thing, and I will
 “ receive you ; and will be a father unto
 “ you, and ye shall be my sons and daugh-
 “ ters, saith the Lord Almighty*.”

* 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, 18.

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S E R M O N XIV.

MATTHEW xvi. 19.

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

PETER was one of the first disciples of our Lord, and the first preacher of his gospel to Jew and Gentile. It was he who openly declared the great truths of the gospel, on the day of Pentecost, to all that were in Jerusalem: and being taught from above not to call that common or unclean “which God had cleansed †;” or, in other words, no longer to neglect the Gentiles, who were now to be called to the

† Acts x. 15.

fold of Christ, he received Cornelius the first Gentile convert as a Christian brother. Hence it is that, in allusion to his name, he is called the rock, or stone, which Christ had determined to use in laying the foundation of his church. But then it should be remembered, that all the apostles were pillars, and that each of them was a foundation, for “the twelve foundations had the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb †.” They were all supporters of the Christian edifice; and though Peter was the first workman, he had no greater powers or privileges than St. Paul, who calls himself a master builder; or than James, or John who survived all the disciples of Jesus. They were brethren, and, as such, all were equal: at least, nothing can be determined in favor of the superiority or primacy of Peter over the rest of the apostles, from his name, or the use our Saviour made either of it or him. As an

† Revel. xxi. 14

apostle,

apostle, he was to go, not to have a see or seat, but to go and teach all nations; and, therefore, he could not be a bishop of any particular city, whose office was not only inferior to that of an apostle, but inconsistent with it, implying a fixed residence. St. Peter, therefore, if he ever had been at Rome, could not have been bishop there; and, consequently, the bishops of that city have no right to call themselves the successors of Peter, or any other apostle, nor their seat apostolical, in preference to many other cities, who have an equal claim with Rome to that title, as having all been founded by apostles. As the bishop of Rome is not, in his proud throne, the successor of any of the poor disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, so neither is the church of Rome that assembly of Christians, against which, it was foretold, the gates of hell should never prevail: for the inquisition is truly one of the gates of hell, which prevails in that church, the members of which have long since made them-

themselves “ drunk with the blood of the
 “ martyrs of Jesus,” by their horrible and
 bloody persecution of Protestants ; and,
 by their modern doctrines, for such in-
 deed they are, of purgatory, of prayers to
 saints or sinners, and prayers for the dead,
 and a superstitious veneration of the bones
 and beards of men, and other relicks, have
 shewn themselves to be those who are de-
 scribed unto us, in the Revelations of St.
 John, as “ making merchandise of the
 “ souls and bodies of men.” Whatever,
 therefore, is the meaning of the gift of the
 keys, the Pope and his adherents can have
 no right to them. He may carry keys, as
 the Scribes and Pharisees are reported to
 have done, as ornaments, and to express
 the power they had usurped of admitting
 and rejecting men, of opening the doors of
 the temple, or of shutting them. The
 Scribes and Pharisees, who had placed them-
 selves in the seat of Moses, resemble the
 pretended successors of Peter in their seat
 at Rome, in many other respects, as well

as that of being key-bearers. "They bind
 " heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne,
 " and lay them on mens shoulders ; but
 " they themselves will not move them
 " with one of their fingers. But all their
 " works they do to be seen of men. They
 " make broad their phylacteries, and en-
 " large the borders of their garments, and
 " love the uppermost rooms, and the chief
 " seats, and greetings, and to be called
 " Rabbi*." How different such vain men
 are, from those who are blessed with the
 spirit and temper of the Gospel, is evident
 from these words of Christ : " be not ye
 " called Rabbi ; for one is your master,
 " even Christ, or the Messiah, and all ye
 " are brethren. And call no man your fa-
 " ther upon earth ; for one is your father,
 " which is in heaven. Neither be ye called
 " masters, for one is your master, even
 " Christ. But he that is greatest among
 " you shall be your servant. And whoso-

* Matt. xxiii. 4—7.

“ever shall exalt himself shall be abased;
 “and he that shall humble himself shall
 “be exalted †.” Here we have Christ
 himself declaring against all proud titles,
 and against that superiority of one disciple
 over another, which has been falsely as-
 cribed to the apostle Peter, and usurped by
 his pretended successors; who have made
 themselves not only Rabbis and masters,
 but even greater than the one master, who
 is Christ, or the one and only father of us
 all, who is in heaven, by claiming a power
 to dispense with the divine law, by making
 laws of their own, and introducing many
 doctrines, absolutely forbidden by Christ,
 such as the “adoration of saints and angels,
 “the prohibiting of marriage, the com-
 “manding of men to abstain from meats,
 “which God hath created to be received
 “with thanksgiving; the worshipping of
 “the creature more than, or besides, the
 “Creator;” with transubstantiation, and

† Matt. xxiii. 8—12.

other impious absurdities, supported by all the terrors of the inquisition, the most cruel tortures, and horrible executions. If these men have keys, they are such as their real predecessors, not Peter, but the Scribes and Pharisees, had, to whom our Saviour says, “ woe unto you, hypocrites; for ye
 “ shut up the kingdom of heaven against
 “ men: ye neither go in yourselves,
 “ neither suffer ye them that are entering
 “ to go in †.” Or as it is recorded by St. Luke, “ ye have taken away the key of
 “ knowlege: ye entered not in yourselves,
 “ and them that were entering in ye hindered ‡,” or forbad. Like these masters also are the priests of Rome, indefatigable in promoting the worship of their great idol; and to them may be fitly applied these words of our Lord: “ Woe unto you,
 “ Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for
 “ ye compass sea and land to make one
 “ profelyte, and when he is made, ye make

† Matt. xxiii. 13.

‡ Luke xi. 52.

“ him

“him two-fold more the child of hell, or gehenna, than yourselves †.” The disciple will not have less zeal than his master; the convert than he who converts him: on the contrary, zeal is apt to blaze out more fiercely in the profelytes, than in the makers of them.

The Scribes and Pharisees are charged by our Lord with taking away the key of knowlege: and the Romanists, whatever keys they may have besides, are as guilty of this charge, as these their predecessors in superstition and the abuse of power. All the knowlege we have, whether of human or divine affairs, must be derived from perception and reason, or revelation; there is no other source of knowlege. The first, without which the other is useless, they themselves reject: and they deprive their abject followers of any access to the other, by forbidding them the use of their

† Matt. xxiii. 15.

Bibles. Give up your reason, and give up the scriptures to these men, and then you are qualified to be of their particular superstition, which they call Catholic, as if it were universal, and that for no other reason than because it excludes all who contend for the faith as it is in Jesus, and for “the
“ liberty whereunto they are called, and in
“ which they are required to stand fast.”

The gospel was preached by the apostles, and all the powers they were possessed of were employed in promoting the knowledge of it; and St. Paul affirms, that it was “preached,” in his time, “unto every
“ creature which is under heaven*.” All
“ were to hear the gospel; all were to
“ continue in the faith; all were to search
“ the Scriptures.” What power then could shut them up from us, or forbid us to read them? Not any powers given by the gospel, for that would be to destroy itself. Not any

* Colos. i. 23.

powers derived from the apostles, for that would be to destroy their own commission. It is, therefore, true of the church of Rome, that, instead of possessing the keys, they have thrown them away, or rather they have substituted false for true keys; instead of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, political instruments to serve the temporal ends of ambitious and mercenary men: instruments, by which the consciences of men are subdued, their most private thoughts made known to those, who, being masters of them, will soon be masters of whatever else they please.

II Keys to your minds are the keys they pretend to, who make and unmake laws to serve their own wicked purposes of power and riches. For this reason every thing is put up to sale among them, even piety, and virtue, and future rewards. The merits of those, who are supposed to have had more than they could want or use, are transferred for money to them who have
little

little or none of their own. Sins are cancelled; the performance of almost every duty is dispensed with; virtues, nay heaven itself, bought and sold in consequence of these golden keys, pretended to be transmitted in succession from Peter to the Pope.

But is it not amazing, in such a country as this, where the scriptures are publicly read, and where men are not compelled to submit their reason and consciences to the absolute will of a priest; where there is no inquisition, no torture; that even here these gross impositions should prevail and proselytes be made to Popery? This is owing to the mighty power of the keys; a forged right to shut and open the gates of heaven; to admit the greatest sinners, and keep out all who will not acknowledge them to have the possession of St. Peter's keys.

Nor is this all: for besides heaven and hell, they have invented another place, through which every soul must pass, a
 Q middle

middle state, where, as in the ordeal trial upon earth, the departed spirit is exposed to flames; and to be confined, till prayers, bought and paid for at an agreed price, purchase a dismissal. How happy those who die rich, no matter how their riches have been acquired! and how unhappy the poor! for money is all in all in this gainful system.

Persuade the weak and ignorant, that there is such a place as purgatory, from whence the Romanists alone can free them by purchasing their prayers; persuade them, that the priest has power over heaven to shut or open the gates thereof, and what would not men give to be admitted? But let us ask how he came by this power of the keys. Not in consequence of the succession to St. Peter. This has been sufficiently proved to be a vain pretence. Nothing more was given by the words of Christ to Peter, than was within a little time after given to all the apostles, in these
very

very words, “ verily I say unto you, what-
 “ soever ye shall bind on earth shall be
 “ bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye
 “ shall loose on earth shall be loosed in
 “ heaven *.”

If the keys of heaven were a gift to Peter only, who admitted the rest of the apostles into the kingdom ? and how then could any but Peter open it to others ? The kingdom of heaven is the dominion that was given to him who is eminently called the son of man, which comprehends the state of Christians in heaven and on earth, here and hereafter, the whole reign of Christ, whose empire is universal. The power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven is no other than the privilege of opening or shutting, that is, in other terms, of admitting or refusing to admit men, as they are qualified or not qualified, to be members of the kingdom of Christ here,

* Matt. xviii. 18.

in order to their future admission into the divine presence in the world to come. This power is explained by the words immediately following. “ Whatsoever thou shalt
 “ bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
 “ and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth
 “ shall be loosed in heaven *.” Or heaven shall be open to all you admit as members of the kingdom on earth; and the condition, promised to all who are received, shall be confirmed and established above. This condition is the remission of sins. And, therefore, it is said, in the general commission given to all the apostles, by our Lord and Saviour after his resurrection from the dead, when he breathed on them, not unto Peter only but to them all, “ receive
 “ ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye
 “ remit, they are remitted unto them;
 “ and whosoever sins ye retain, they
 “ are retained †.”

* Matt. xvi. 19.

† John xx. 23.

The power of remitting sins was exactly the same with that of admitting men into the kingdom. The condition on the part of man was to acknowledge Jesus for his Lord, and to profess obedience to his laws: the condition on the part of Christ was, that all the sins committed before the time of our conversion to Christianity should be remitted. But it is to be presumed, that Christians are not to renew the old man, the body of sin, their former life and conversation: “for where remission of these is, “ says St. Paul, there is no more offering “ for sin *. Christ died unto sin once †. “ He hath appeared once to put away “ sin ‡.” Let us, therefore, perform our part by endeavouring to be perfect in obedience; and let us depend upon the mercy and goodness of God, through Christ, for the pardon of our failings and infirmities, rather than put any trust or confidence in forged grants, and pretended powers, for which no authority can be produced from reason or from scripture.

* Heb. x. 18.

† Rom. vi. 10.

‡ Heb. ix. 26.

S E R M O N XV.

MATT. vi. 10.

Thy will be done.

TH E whole duty of man, and all his happiness, is comprehended in this short sentence, “thy will be done.” As we are religious beings, God is the first and greatest object of our affections. And to do his will on earth, in like manner as it is performed in heaven, is to discharge our duty in all the several relations we bear to God, and man, and every other creature. The natural consequence of doing this would be to have every good being our friend. We should then be free from terrors of every kind, and continue to ourselves that inestimable blessing, pure and perfect innocence, which all admire, and all have

lost. Every step without it is, or ought to be, intolerable to the mind; every approach towards it is more satisfactory than all other gratifications without it. If men had never acted, but in conformity to the will of him who made them, there would have been no evil in the world, no sin, nor any of its deadly consequences; the earth would have been a paradise, and we should have seen God, and not have died. But, alas, this is not the present condition of man! He soon departed from his innocence; he forfeited all those blessings; and he can have no access to a future state of happiness, but by repentance and obedience, and by passing through the dark and dreadful gulph of death.

In a state of innocence all nature was man's friend and servant; the earth brought forth without labor; and the beasts of the field were not hurtful to him, who called every one of them after his name. But what amazing difference is there between
that

that and the present state of things! We seem at war with nature. What we get is with the sweat of our brows. Labor, sickness, sorrow, death, is the lot of man; and his friendship with most other animals is dissolved. If he is merciful to any, it is because he cannot do without them; and they purchase his favor at the price of life. Surely we might live upon better terms with most animals than we do, by not being so cruel to them, as too many of us certainly are. But what favor can be expected from such beings as men are towards other animals, who shew so little to one another of their own species! How many are destroyed by war! How many more perish by want, oppression, and neglect! To suffer or occasion those calamities, which we see in life, could not have been the end for which man was created. And if we oppose the design of God in creating us, disturbing nature by our cruelties, what have we to expect from him, but fearful judgment! Great reason, therefore, had our
Saviour,

Saviour, when he directed his disciples how to pray, to teach them this petition, “thy
“ will be done.”

But, when we examine different systems of religion, shall we not find great diversity of opinions concerning the will of God, not only in points of faith, but in matters of practice? We certainly shall: but then the difference between true religion and the abuse of it, which is superstition, may easily be known by their respective appearances. The one has hope, and love, and charity, and humility, and modesty, and reason, in her train; the other is surrounded by stakes, and tortures, attended by pride, and ignorance, and the furies.

It is happy for us, that the will of God is delivered in the scriptures, where every man may see the whole of his duty, and where the noblest motives are proposed to encourage him in the discharge of it. To revelation we owe much information, and
many

many lights, which human reason, though it could not discover, cannot but approve. Reason is not always the faculty that discovers truth to every man; we derive the greatest part of our knowlege by instruction from others: it is communicated, and few, very few have been blessed with superior talents to make many great and useful discoveries. But by whatever means we acquire knowlege, whether by accidental circumstances, which have led to the discovery of many important truths, or by painful and laborious researches, or by communication from others, if what is proposed to us for our assent is not contradictory to any certain knowlege we may have previously acquired, it should be received according to the degree of evidence it may bring with it. If the truth depends upon the authority of the person who relates it, which is the case of revelation, the utmost caution should be taken not to pervert or misapply the terms in which it is conveyed. If they are obscure, it will be best not to be
too

too positive in the interpretation of them; and if they are sufficiently clear in themselves, darkness should not be brought over them from obscure passages. They should rather serve as a light to dark places, than be darkened by them. When difficulties arise, reason should always be called in to our aid. It is a good guide, and if it is not permitted to lead, should never be left. It may not be equal to the discovery of all truths, and yet be necessary to keep men from going wrong; for he will have very little chance to be in the right, who determines not to reason at all. The variety of sects, which have started up in the Christian world, is a proof of the necessity there is to make use of reason in matters of religion. All pretend to the same divine authority, and appeal to the same writings; and, therefore, without some criterion, some rule to direct us in our choice, how are we to determine in favor of any one of them? And what other rule is there besides reason? When, therefore, any opinions are proposed,

posed, which will not bear to be examined by reason ; when human reason is treated as a carnal weapon not to be made use of by the Christian warrior, it is to be feared, that superstition and enthusiasm, and not that which the scriptures call, “ your reasonable service,” is to be supported. And though superstition is a great enemy to such a carnal thing as human reason, it is by no means averse to persecution, to fire and sword. Which is the honestest and best way of making converts, and of preserving them, when they are made, may be left to any man, but the persecutor, to determine. When men depart from reason, they depart from humanity, and become cruel as well as superstitious. Without this necessary light, however faint or feeble it may have been represented by some, who perhaps have spoken of it as they found it in themselves, there is nothing so absurd or unworthy, which may not be sanctified under the specious pretence of serving the cause of religion. This is to excuse the many frauds,
and

and impostures, and murders, that have been committed, but which reason could never approve. Will human reason plead for the inquisition, impiously called holy, or for the credibility of Popish legends? And if reason is not to be regarded in matters of faith, what has the Protestant to say in excuse for himself, for having separated from the church of Rome? Whatever the members of the Romish church may maintain, nothing can be so absurd as Protestants denying the use of reason. They urge it against supremacy in Popes, false interpretation of the power of the keys, transubstantiation, and other gross superstitions: and, therefore, if it be lawful to make use of it against one sect or party of men, why is it not as lawful against others, even against themselves, if they depart from it? Can they say, it is right for us to reason when we please, though others are not to reason at all? or is this weapon holy in one hand, and profane and carnal in another?

But

But some have ventured to assert, that human reason is totally distinct from divine reason; and that, in religious matters, men may be most liable to err, when they rely most upon the strength of their reason.

All men agree, that it is right to obey the will of him who made us. No power can control the divine will, and God is not accountable for his actions. He is almighty, and may dispose of all things as he shall judge proper. But since he has been graciously pleased to distinguish man from other animals, by bestowing on him the great privilege of reason, it is not to be supposed, that he will counteract his own goodness by requiring from men a service that is not entirely reasonable. To search after truth, in every case, as the rule of action, is to seek the will of God, who never acts but in conformity to his own unerring wisdom; and who is, therefore, always determined by truth or fitness and propriety.

propriety. If we suppose truth to depend upon arbitrary will, then nothing can be virtuous, or true, or just, or good, but because it was willed to be so; and, therefore, what is virtue might be vice, truth itself be a lie, and any means be fit for the most opposite ends, by an act of the will. How much more agreeable to the nature of God and of reason is it to say, that God performs certain acts, because they are in themselves fit and right to be performed, rather than to assert, that he can will that which is good to become evil, or that which is evil to become good.

It is not difficult for any man to discover, that truth has no dependence upon will; for that faculty does not determine nor perceive the relation and propriety of things, but is always exerted in consequence of certain motives, which influence and direct it: and the most perfect will is that, which in every instance is determined
by

by the best understanding. No one can prove an action or a doctrine just and true, because he wills it to be so; but must conclude it to be right or wrong, independent on his will, and antecedent to any exertion of it. It is the understanding, not the will, which perceives truth and reasons from it. We perceive many truths, which we never willed to be true, nor can by any efforts of willing convert into falsehoods. We are not satisfied of the propriety or rectitude of actions, because they were willed, but inquire why they were done, what motives influenced the will, or what reasons were offered by the understanding for these effects of the active faculty. Truth and virtue, therefore, depend not upon will.

Perhaps it may be said, that the divine will can make truths, though that faculty in creatures be not able to do it.

But is it not the greatest imperfection to will, or to act, without understanding?

R

And

And how are truths to be made? They are eternal and immutable; were always perceived, not made, in the divine Mind.

In all arts and sciences there are fixed and unalterable relations of things. We perceive every where a necessary agreement between some things, which cannot possibly be changed; and between others as unalterable a disagreement: and where this agreement or fitness concerns moral actions it is called moral truth; and actions performed agreeably to such truth are said to be virtuous. Thus all men perceive the relation of gratitude to beneficence, of reparation to injury, of rewards to men who promote the good of society, and of punishment to such as invade other mens property. And from a perception of the fitness of these things to be done, the man becomes sensible of the obligation he is under to do them. By obligation is meant, that state the mind is in, when it perceives the fitness of any moral truth to be complied with and put into action.

Hence

Hence appears the error of those, who allow of no obligation, which does not result from the will of a superior. For is it impossible for a man to think, that it is his duty, or that he ought to act agreeably to truth in any case, supposing him not to consider the will of a superior in that instance? It is true, there is an obligation arising from the will of superiors, but it is founded upon truth and reason. We ought to obey them in all things that are just and honest; for they have a right to our obedience, to our submission, and compliance with their just commands. And to the supreme Being the most perfect obedience is due; for he is our creator and preserver, a kind and merciful father, from whom we receive all things, and “in whom we live, move, and have our being.” From these truths arises the obligation we are under to obey the will of God, which ever directs to what is good, and just, and reasonable.

R 2 Hence

Hence it follows, that righteousness is founded in the nature of things, or their immutable and eternal agreement, antecedent to any will or command; that all men are indispensably obliged to follow truth in every action and inquiry; and that whatever sentiments some men may have of Almighty God and his Christ, immorality or unrighteousness is upon all accounts, and on every hypothesis, most absurd and unreasonable.

Christians consider moral virtues, not only as right in themselves, and most worthy of the practice of every moral being, but as the laws of God, and the commands of Christ, who is their Saviour, king, and judge, and who has taught them when they pray to say, “thy will be done, O God, “in earth, as it is in heaven.” It is the will of God, that we should not only do all that virtue and religion require to be done; but that we should likewise undergo with patience and resignation all the evils and calamities,

calamities, which may befall us by his appointment or permission. Patience and forgiveness are the most amiable and distinguishing parts of the character of a real Christian. To be able to bear injuries, and to forgive, shews a greatness of soul, that is not to be acquired or supported, but by the powers of religion. It should be considered, that every calamity or loss, however great, is at least permitted by him, who, if not in this world, in the next, will amply reward those good Christians, who have patiently submitted to all their afflictions, in a state of being so very short and perplexed, so full of evil and anxiety, as the present certainly is.

As Christians we have the great privilege of being his subjects, whose laws are suited to our capacities and circumstances, and admirably contrived to promote our happiness, which was the end of his coming into the world. Christ is our Lord and master, our king, and if we do not obey

R 3 him

him for our own good, we are utterly inexcusable. What is there required of us, in the Christian dispensation, that is so very hard to be performed, as that we should refuse obedience to that great and good Being, who divested himself of the glory he had with the Father, and humbled himself so as to become a man, a servant to his own disciples, and to suffer death, even the death of the cross, for our sake? Is not all we can do too little in return for so much goodness? and yet how far short are we, for the most part, of that measure of perfection, which the Gospel requires of us, though nothing is required of us, but what is for our own good? The chief law, and that which our Saviour was pleased to call his “new commandment,” is love. And is this so hard a task? Would we risk the glorious advantages promised to all who believe in Christ, rather than love one another? Has enmity and cruelty, or destructive profligacy and absurd impiety, any charms to enchant the mind, and withdraw it from
love

love and mercy, virtue and religion? Nothing can be more unaccountable, than the follies and vices that prevail in the world; for they not only do not answer the end proposed by them in this life, which is temporal happiness, but are threatened with very severe punishments in the next. And whatever such men as continue in wicked courses may think, if they ever think, it cannot be, that God will finally take no account of their disobedience, or not make a proper distinction between good and bad men. If wisdom, and religion, and honor, and virtue, have not power to reclaim, let this awful denunciation be considered: “the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

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S E R M O N XVI.

LUKE xxii. 19, 20.

He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

IN the interpretation of scripture, the only guide to Protestants, we should be very careful not to disturb the text, by changing one word for another, by adding or omitting any word or circumstance, by converting plain words, which are easily understood, into obscure and figurative terms, or, on the contrary, taking figures, images, and allusions, for the very objects
with

with which they happen to be compared, and which they resemble only in one or more circumstances.

Such liberties will occasion great mistakes, and no less confusion, in any part of the Bible; but are more particularly to be avoided in those passages which require action, and enjoin positive rites and ceremonies.

By adopting the change of the word mystery into the word sacrament*, and by a literal application of those words to the joining together of man and wife, which were delivered by St. Paul figuratively, concerning the spiritual union of Christ and his church, the church of Rome has made a sacrament of marriage. The apostle, when he says, this is a great “mystery,” adds, “but I speak concerning Christ and

* Ephes. v. 32. Το μυστήριον τούτο μέγα ἐστίν. *Sacramentum hoc magnum est.* Vulg.

“the church.” The word mystery had been improperly rendered sacrament in a Latin translation; and this is the only foundation for the sacrament of marriage. It is true, this word, sacrament, was used with great latitude among the primitive Christians; and in an extensive sense, prayer and almost every Christian duty may as well be called a sacrament as marriage; but this is no reason, or a very bad one, for extending the number of them to seven: nor can any thing excuse the anathemas, the unchristian curses, bestowed on those who do not believe, that there ought to be exactly seven, that grace is conferred by the performance of them, and that each of them was instituted by Christ; which cannot seriously be asserted of marriage; for it had been instituted long before.

Another instance as extraordinary, though not so general, is the application

* Matt. xxiv. 28.

of this proverbial expression to the sacrament: “wheresoever the carcase is, there
 “will the eagles be gathered together* :”
 as if the word carcase implied, “the presence of the divine majesty in the sacrament of his body and blood;” for so it has been interpreted.

When such liberties as these are taken with the scriptures; when the use of our senses, to the testimony of which Christ himself appealed, is denied us, and the use of reason, without which we should be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, is also taken from us, nothing can be so absurd, but it may be obtruded upon us as an article of faith. Hence such absurdities, as could never be admitted by men in their senses, if they were not consecrated with the holy name of religion, are thereby, as well as by the punishments usually inflicted on those who are hardy

* Matt. xxiv. 28.

enough to deny them, rendered very serious. The tyrant, who has deprived his followers of the use of their reason, no longer thinks himself obliged to treat them as men, but compels them to carry their burden, and obey him implicitly in all things.

The inquisition, impiously called holy, and other horrid tribunals, will account for mens conforming to any opinions, however absurd, in countries where they are erected; but it is, to the last degree, astonishing, that any should be found among us, in the present age, so very weak, as to be seduced by any pretences whatever to forsake that “glorious liberty whereunto we
“are called, being delivered from the
“bondage of corruption. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ
“hath made us free, and be not entangled
“again with the yoke of bondage*.”

* Gal. v. 1.

The

The seducer does not always appeal to the Bible; he knows it is always against him, and therefore shut up and forbidden to be read. But yet, in some cases, it is opened and admitted as an evidence; and the words, "this is my body," have been produced as an argument in favor of the grossest absurdity, and, I may add, the greatest impiety, that ever was forged by the weakest or wickedest of beings. Might it not as fairly be inferred, that Herod was actually changed into a fox, when Christ called him by that name, and the Pharisees into real vipers, as that the bread in the hand of Jesus should be changed into himself, he holding himself in his own hand, and delivering himself to be eaten by every one of his disciples, being in them and out of them, talking to them, and, at the same time, if he eat of the bread, eating himself? How is it possible, that any Protestants in a free country, as this is, can be so far frightened out of their wits, by the vain terrors of seducing priests, as to adopt this
absurd

absurd notion, with all its impious and detestable consequences? Why do they not, as they ought, if they would be consistent with themselves, assert, that Jesus was a door, and not a man, when he said, “I am the door *?” and really and not figuratively a vine, when he said, “I am the true vine †.” St. Paul, speaking of the rock, of the waters of which the children of Israel drank in the wilderness, says, that “rock was Christ.” Are not these words to be as literally understood, as those in the text, “this is my body?” Certainly they are: for Christ is compared to the rock in one place, and to the bread, blessed, and broken, and distributed, in the other place.

If there ever was such a mode of speaking as by figures, it should be allowed in this case, were it only to avoid the absurdity and impiety of the Popish doctrine, which pretends to change a piece of bread

* John x. 7. † Chap. xv. 1.

into the living God, and requires men to eat the very substance of him they worship.

If the instances already alledged are not sufficient to excuse us from taking the words, “this is my body,” in a too literal sense, many more may be produced.

When the prophet Ezekiel † is directed to shave his head and his beard, and to divide the hair by weight into three parts, and dispose of them as commanded by the Lord God, it immediately follows, “this is Jerusalem.” Is, therefore, the denunciation against that city to be taken for the city itself? Is the city the razor, the hair, or the action of burning it, and smiting it with a knife, and scattering it in the wind, or any other action or circumstance, taken notice of before it is said, “this is Jerusalem?” Or is the hair and the burning of it

* Chap. v. 1:

the very thing signified by such action? No surely. No more then is the bread the actual body signified by it; or the breaking the bread the actual sufferings of Christ.

But yet again, to these instances may be added two more, which must be allowed to carry great authority with them, as they contain the institution of two positive rites, and one of them is the passover itself, which our Lord, with the disciples, celebrated just before he instituted his own supper.

When Abraham was commanded to circumcise every man-child, it is said, “this is my covenant*.” Here circumcision is called the covenant, which was, properly speaking, the token only of the covenant, as it is called immediately after.

When the Lord had ordered the children of Israel to slay a lamb “for an house, and

* Gen. xvii. 10.

“ to take the blood, and strike it on the
 “ posts, that when he passed through to
 “ smite all the first-born in the land of
 “ Egypt, it might be for a token ; when
 “ I see the blood, says the Lord, I will
 “ pass over you, and this shall be unto
 “ you for a memorial* ;” the eating of this
 lamb, which was no other than a memo-
 rial of this remarkable transaction, is called
 the passover. “ Ye shall eat it in haste, it
 “ is the Lord’s passover †.” In like manner
 the Lord’s supper is called a memorial of
 his death and passion. “ Do this, in re-
 “ membrance of me,” says our Saviour
 himself during the institution of it; which
 words are thus explained by St. Paul, “ as
 “ often as ye eat this bread, and drink this
 “ cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he
 “ come ‡.” This could not with any pro-
 priety of speech have been said, if he ac-
 tually descended and came, whenever this
 rite was duly celebrated: nor is remem-

* Exod. xii. 3. 7. 12, 13, 14. † Ver. 11. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 26.
 brance

brance applied to persons who are actually present in the body. But if the bread ceased to be bread, and became the body of him who gave it, since the bread broken, by the confession of all, signifies the death and passion of our Lord, he is hereby actually supposed to be dead before his crucifixion, and yet alive to deliver himself as dead, to be eaten by his disciples : than which there never was a greater absurdity. And this merely because the words, “ this is
 “ my body,” must not be interpreted to mean, this signifies my body, this represents my body ; though the like phrase is thus interpreted upon many other occasions ; for nothing is more common, than to call the resemblances, the images, the pictures, and even the writings of men, by their names, as if they were actually present themselves, when they appear only by that which represents them.

But if these words, “ this is my body,”
 are to be taken in the strictest sense, and

must not be supposed to mean, what they would in the common use of language, this signifies or represents my body, what shall we do with these words of St. Paul, “this is my body, which is *broken* for you §,” or with the words of the Evangelist, “he brake it †?” For the body of Jesus was not really broken, not a bone of him was broken; and yet, if the bread was his body after it was blessed, and it then follows, “he brake it,” and we are not allowed to make use of any figure, it should follow, that his body was broken. But this is true only in a figurative sense. To break bread is proper, but if the body of a man is said to be broken, it must be improperly or figuratively said. His blood, it is true, was spilt; but even that is not literally, and in the strictest sense, true of the wine; nor is the cup literally the liquor it contains, much less is it the testament or covenant, that was sealed and confirmed by the blood

§ 1 Cor. xi. 24.

† Matt. xxvi. 26.

of Jesus. In short, there is no possibility of making any sense of the words of this institution, without allowing them to be used figuratively, that is, without allowing them to be interpreted or understood, as the same words would be in any other book. Let us, therefore, carefully examine into the precise meaning of them.

“This is my body.” This what? Not the bread: for whoever is capable of looking into the original will soon discover that to be incongruous. It is the whole action that is, or represents, the body of our Lord. It is the bread as blessed, as broken, and as distributed, which is called *this* by our Lord.

The word we translate *body* signifies rather a dead than a living body; and that it is so used in this place is evident, from the action of breaking the bread, from our Lord's calling it his memorial, and the apostle's declaration, that hereby we “do

“ shew forth the Lord’s death till he come.” Hence, as was observed before, it appears, there is a very gross absurdity in supposing our Lord to be dead and alive at the same instant, to give himself as dead, before he died, to be eaten of his disciples.

When our Lord celebrated his last supper, though he expressly requires us to do the like in remembrance of him, it could not then indeed be taken as a memorial, for his sufferings were not accomplished, his crucifixion was to come. At that time, therefore, this supper prefigured what was to happen, and represented that, which when past should, in like manner, be commemorated, as he himself had appointed. It is to us a memorial. “ This do in remembrance of me ;” or, to keep closer to the original, “ do this for my remembrance.”

The shewing forth the Lord’s death, in this manner, until his second coming again,

is required of all. And, therefore, it is most extraordinary, that they, who insist so strenuously upon the strictest sense of every letter in some words of the institution, should take away one half of it, by denying the cup to the laity, in direct opposition to the command of Christ, who says, “drink ye all of it.” It is in vain to say, that under one species the communicants receive both, the blood with the body; for the body is not the living body with the life-blood in it, nor is that the blood to be commemorated; but it is the blood as poured out in testimony, or as a seal to the covenant; and, therefore, distinguished from the body, and made a separate part of the institution; the whole of which may as well be set aside, as that part of it which is called, “the New Testament in his blood,” the confirmation of the new covenant with man by the shedding of Christ’s blood.

Is it for this that any separate from us, and go over to a church, in which the sacrament of the Lord's supper is not administered under both kinds, and in which it is to be doubted, whether any one member, even the pope himself, is a Christian, that is, effectually baptized ! for the efficacy of the sacraments, according to that absurd superstition, depends upon the intention of the priest who administers them.

Many have been confirmed in their error, by applying those words of our Lord to his last supper, which had been delivered long before ; and which relate to a particular occasion, which was this : the Jews said unto him, “ our fathers did eat manna in the “ desert, as it is written, he gave them “ bread from heaven to eat *.” Our Saviour, who frequently made some comparison between his doctrines, and any object that remarkably presented itself, took this occasion to compare himself to the manna of the Jews. “ I am the living bread, the

* John vi. 31.

“ bread

“ bread of life, which came down from
 “ heaven. Your fathers did eat manna in
 “ the wilderness and are dead: he that be-
 “ lieveth on me hath everlasting life. This
 “ is the bread which cometh down from
 “ heaven, that a man may eat thereof and
 “ not die*.” Hence it is evident, that he
 means the spiritual participation of those
 benefits, which the world was to receive
 through his mission and death. “ The
 “ bread that I will give is my flesh, which
 “ I will give for the life of the world.”
 And, therefore, when he says, “ my flesh
 “ is meat indeed, and my blood is drink
 “ indeed †,” the meaning is, my death,
 which will be a cruel death, whereby the
 blood shall be separated from the body, is
 nevertheless as profitable indeed to be-
 lievers, with regard to eternal life, as com-
 mon bread is necessary to the support of
 this life.

Whoever applies these or the like ex-
 pressions to the sacrament should take care,

* John vi. 48—51.

† Ver. 55.

that

that the application be made subservient to spiritual purposes. “ We have received not
 “ the spirit of the world, but the spirit
 “ which is of God, that we might know
 “ the things that are freely given to us of
 “ God: which things also we speak, not
 “ in the words which man’s wisdom teach-
 “ eth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth,
 “ comparing spiritual things with spiri-
 “ tual *.”

St. Austin, who lived in the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century †, advises Christians to be particularly careful not to take the literal for the figurative or spiritual sense of scripture ‡. His rule for distinguishing between the letter and the figure is this: “ if the words

* 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

† St. Austin was born A. D. 355, died 430.

‡ In principio cavendum est, ne figuratam locutionem ad literam accipias. August. de Doct. Christ. lib. iii. c. 5. tom. iii.

“ imply

“ imply a command to avoid any thing that
 “ is wicked or abominable, or to perform
 “ that which is useful and beneficial, they
 “ ought to be interpreted in a literal sense.
 “ On the contrary, if they seem, in the
 “ literal sense, to enjoin an act which is
 “ criminal and flagitious, or to oppose
 “ what is useful and beneficent, recourse
 “ should be had to a spiritual or figurative
 “ meaning.” And he then immediately
 produces the following instance: “ unless
 “ you eat the flesh of the Son of Man,
 “ and drink his blood, you have no life in
 “ you.” This passage, says Austin, in the
 literal sense, seems “ to command an act
 “ that is wicked and abominable: “ it is
 “ therefore a figure; by which we are re-
 “ quired to communicate, and sweetly and
 “ profitably bring to our remembrance the
 “ passion of our Lord, that his flesh was
 “ wounded and crucified for us*.”

If

* Si præceptiva locutio est, aut flagitium aut facinus
 vetans, aut utilitatem aut beneficentiam jubens, non est
 figurata.

If the different sects of Christians would be prevailed upon to follow strictly the words of the institution, and lay aside their own additions, they would then have one faith in this article; and it would not be very easy, if possible, for them to form different opinions concerning a subject, which at present so much distracts them. Let the Papist, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist, give up those terms and phrases, which, unfortunately, have been added to the original words of the institution, and all ground of difference will instantly be removed; and this sacred rite or memorial be as plain and intelligible, as any other duty required of Christians.

figurata. Si autem flagitium aut facinus videtur jubere, aut utilitatem aut beneficentiam vetare, figurata est. *Nisi manducaveritis, inquit, carnem filii hominis, et sanguinem biberitis, non habebitis vitam in vobis.* Joh. vi. 53. Facinus vel flagitium videtur jubere: figura est ergo, præcipiens passioni Domini esse communicandum, et suaviter atque utiliter recondendum in memoriâ, quod pro nobis caro ejus crucifixa et vulnerata sit. Ibid. c. 16.

Let

Let the scriptures speak for themselves. Let the doctrines of Christ and his apostles be delivered in their own words. Lay aside all human inventions, all additions to the word of God, all terms that are anti-scriptural and barbarous, and peace and unity will soon be restored to the church, which are of infinitely greater value than controversy, that is, than the rage of parties, which subsist principally upon artificial terms, not to be found in scripture, the jargon of school-men, from whom we receive nothing more than hard names of their own invention, equally the disgrace of language, philosophy, and religion.

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S E R M O N XVII.

ROMANS xiii. 8.

Love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

TH E obligation to religion and virtue, or the practice of all moral duties, is necessary and eternal; no powers in heaven or on earth can dissolve it; for without works of piety and goodness, justice and humanity, it is impossible to procure the good pleasure of the one, or the well-being of the other.

To reform the world, and make men better, as well as more knowing, is the intent and purpose of our holy religion, calling us to repentance, and “teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,

“ lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world : * ”
 not to allow men to deviate from the ways of wisdom, which are “ the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace † ; ”
 not to release them from the strictest engagements to morality ; as if, by faith alone, unattended with fruitful works, they might be justified in the sight of God. The consequence of such a notion would be extremely pernicious. The weightier matters of the law would by most be neglected, and sinners find too much encouragement in the practice of vice here, if faith without moral righteousness were thought sufficient to save them hereafter ‡ .

St.

* Titus ii. 12.

† Proverbs iii. 17.

‡ It is not the author's design to insinuate, that man has any claim to eternal life in consequence of his actions only. He has no claim to life, much less to eternal life. If, indeed, man had not fallen, if he had been absolutely perfect in his obedience, according to the first law imposed upon him, he could not have incurred the divine displeasure, he could not have been an object of punishment, he would have been happy for ever. But

he

St. Paul, it is true, asserts, that “ a man
 “ is justified without the deeds of the law.”
 But by “ the law” in that place he evidently
 means the judaical law, or ceremonious
 customs peculiar to the Jews, and not the
 law of nature, which was the original, all-
 comprehensive law of God. For that
 equally selfish and perverse people would
 allow of no favor, no redemption due to
 the Gentiles, because they were not “ un-
 “ der the law of circumcision.” St. Paul,
 therefore, in the verse immediately fol-

he failed, and it must be confessed, that all have sinned,
 and come short of the glory of God. Rom. iii. 23.
 The wages of sin is death. Rom. vi. 23. The law
 condemns, and sentence is to be pronounced. Mercy
 flows from the Sovereign; God is gracious to his fallen
 creature man, and, through the one Mediator between
 God and man, promises forgiveness of sin. He enters
 into a new covenant, whereby man is to be justified,
 considered as just and holy; but then he is to perform
 his part, and in consequence of his faith, to be good
 and merciful, a doer as well as a hearer of the word;
 “ for not the hearers of the law are just before God,
 “ but the doers of the law shall be justified.”
 Rom. ii. 13. James i. 22.

T

“ lowing,

lowing, asks, “ is he the God of the Jews
 “ only ? is he not also of the Gentiles ? ”
 to which he answers, “ yes, of the Gentiles
 “ also ; seeing it is one God, which shall
 “ justify the circumcision by faith, and un-
 “ circumcision through faith †.”

This is not the only contempt of virtue men have mixed with their notions of the gospel. For whilst some believe not the absolute necessity of moral righteousness, and yet lead a virtuous life, others there are who think it not only reconcileable with, but of service to religion and the scriptures, to reject humanity, and put in practice almost every species of cruelty, every instrument of torture. Christianity is not much obliged to either of these parties ; but the last is surely an abomination to the Lord.

So directly opposite is this to the rules delivered in scripture, and to the examples of Christ and his apostles, that one might

† Rom. iii. 28—30.

justly wonder, how it ever could enter into the heart of man to conceive so strange an opinion, did not common experience convince us, that men do not always speak according to scripture, but force scripture to speak agreeably to their vain purposes, and to teach what it never intended. Would men faithfully report the words of our Lord, and not injuriously blend them with human inventions, the cause of Christ would soon become, what it really is, the cause of the whole world, and infidelity lose its only support. “But there shall,” says St. Peter, “be false teachers, and
 “many shall follow their pernicious ways,
 “by reason of whom, the way of truth
 “shall be evil spoken of*.” Offences will arise, whilst some declare moral duties to be dispensible or unnecessary, and others imagine great merits to result from the hottest persecution of men on account of matters of mere belief or speculation. But

* 2 Peter ii. 1, 2.

know ye, that “all the law is fulfilled in
 “one word, even in this, thou shalt love
 “thy neighbour as thyself*.”

Faith is indeed necessary to the character of a Christian, and all men that have opportunities of knowing the truth are obliged to believe in Jesus, who was the *finisher*, as well as the *author* of our faith: but all faith is dead, without works of charity and love; which works alone can testify “what manner of spirit we are of.” And would men but observe and obey the precepts of Christ, soon would a belief in his person and divine commission ensue.

But let a man believe in all things, and extend his faith even to the removal of mountains; let his zeal for religion be boundless, and his aversion to infidels ever so great, if he wants humanity, if he has not charity, they will profit him nothing:

* Gal. v. 14.

his enmity becomes cruel, his zeal blind and intemperate, and his faith destitute of those “fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance*.”

These, when extended to all men, constitute the character of a true christian believer, and are properly called universal good-will or benevolence. The reasonableness and necessity of which virtue I shall, in this discourse, endeavour to shew, from the constitution of man, and the moral fitness of things, the nature of society, the happiness of individuals, the commands of Christ, and the example of God.

Philanthropy, or the love of men, is not enforced by reason alone, but by the make or natural disposition of man; and a vast variety of peculiar motives in the gospel renders the obligation to this duty more extensive and

* Gal. v. 22, 23.

of greater force. The evidence from truth itself for universal love is indisputable, is obvious to men of the lowest capacity, and has the strictest right to a perpetual obedience. This results from the relations we bear to each other as social creatures, not formed for solitary lives, nor made to be independent one of another; for our interest is united, and the welfare of some depends on the happiness of others: we are not all endued with equal gifts and abilities, but stand in need of mutual aid and assistance.

Even selfishness, the reverse of sincere benevolence, often occasions mutual acts of kindness: for the most selfish wish well to such as are willing and have the power to serve them, and do what they call good, in hopes of a more beneficial return. This may be the cause of some little partial good in the world, by exciting the goodness or generosity of another; but, in the first instance, has so little to do with brotherly love, that it begins and ends in self-love only;

only; and the same sordid principle, that leads them to communicate good to those only from whom they expect more beneficial returns, will not only restrain them from serving any other person, but often induce them to perpetrate any acts of violence or injustice, provided they can be done with impunity, for the same sordid consideration.

It is true, there is an innate desire in us to promote and increase our own happiness; and so far as it is innocent, it is allowable. But when we set false colours and pretences upon it, and study to circumvent, when we would be thought to serve and oblige, the serpent enters, and the dove takes its flight.

Truth is, or ought to be, the sovereign of the soul and all its powers, and should maintain an awful supremacy over all our appetites and passions. And to render our obedience more easy, and even more plea-

fant to ourselves, as well as to convince us by our own sensation, that universal benevolence is the moral chain which holds the world together, God hath also implanted in us a tender concern for others, and by the reciprocal fluctuations of pain and pleasure, disposed us to find the sublimest of our gratifications in the assistance of our fellow-creatures.

Hence humanity derives its name: hence it forces itself upon us; and even the vicious themselves not only find it difficult to resist and subdue its stimulations, but, when they succeed in the conflict, are inwardly ashamed of their own victory.

Even our very instincts, filial and parental, have something both captivating and meritorious in them; and we hardly wonder, that he who is deaf to the call of nature, should also be deaf to the call of God. Thus these general and kind dispositions are both a second argument for, and an additional motive

to universal benevolence : the third is proper to such alone as enjoy the benefits of Christ's appearance upon earth.

Not reason, not affection only, but obedience to him whose name we bear, enforces this great and necessary precept, love all men. He hath left us laws, which chiefly tend to promote universal love and kindness. He hath annexed to them the most powerful and prevailing sanctions, immortal happiness for them that obey, but inexpressible misery for the sons of disobedience. He hath united us into one body, of which body he himself is our head, that we, being members one of another, may exercise mutual love in imitation of him, who laid down his life for all ; and greater love than this, we know, hath no man *. He hath given us a common name, that we may be one community. He hath instituted baptism and the Lord's supper as memo-

* John xv. 13.

rials, not only of his death, but of our faith and duty, as proper means to promote virtue and benevolence; that in all things we may act as becomes the followers of him, who was the great patron and example of christian charity.

These are motives to excite in us a general good-will, which the gospel alone affords us; and when united with the other reasons for benevolence, and added to the natural disposition of men, render inhumanity or uncharitableness a most horrid and inexcusable offence.

Each of these arguments I shall now more fully explain; taking leave, however, to make this one observation by the way, that if men persecute their fellow-creatures, be it to promote what they may call Christianity, though they may bear the name of Christians, they are strangers to the religion of Jesus.

Such

Such is the nature of our imperfect frame, that without affections, in many duties, in many offices, men would be supine and negligent. The full-blown powers of reason burst not forth at once with our beings, but are acquired and improved by industry and labor. A child, from this faculty alone, could not adequately perceive its duty; and some there are, who continue to be children, with respect to reason, as long as they live.

To assist us, therefore, in this obscure and dubious state, to point out natural evils, and their opposite pleasures, to incite to several offices and virtuous actions, God has been pleased to join the additional force of passions to reason, that the one might provoke us to act where the other could not direct, and make us diligent, when we should be very slothful and remiss without them.

Of all these aids or incitements, christian charity or universal love seems to be the
 2 most

most generous and powerful; for its influence is not confined to the breast it inhabits, but extends to every living thing. Man, as before observed, loves not himself alone, unless by a strange abuse of his nature, but delights in the good of his fellow-creatures, and to the utmost of his abilities is willing to promote their happiness: for

“ love, or charity, worketh no ill to his
 “ neighbour *; charity suffereth long and
 “ is kind; charity envieth not; charity
 “ vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
 “ doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh
 “ not her own, is not easily provoked,
 “ thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in ini-
 “ quity, but rejoiceth in the truth; bear-
 “ eth all things, believeth all things, ho-
 “ peth all things, endureth all things †.”

Reason directs us to love our neighbours, and the rest of mankind; but then it receives considerable strength from these na-

* Rom. xiii. 10.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

tural

tural affections. Thus few can see, or hear, or read of the deep distresses of unfortunate men without tears; and, from a compassion, peculiar to the human species, and natural to all minds that are not grossly vitiated and depraved, wish they had met with more happiness, or a quick relief. This humane disposition extends itself to persons in all places and of every age; for we cannot refuse or fail to be affected at the recital of the miseries good and gallant men, who lived before us and in other parts of the world, may have endured, any more than we can avoid pity for our nearest neighbour in immediate distress.

Another argument, to convince us how natural this calm and universal benevolence is to men, may be deduced from the desires we all have for friendship and society. Let a man suppose himself in the unhappy circumstances of the Psalmist, thus expressed in the eighteenth verse of the eighty-eighth Psalm: “ my lovers and
“ friends

“ friends hast thou put away from me,
 “ and hid mine acquaintance out of my
 “ sight.” Let a man imagine himself in a
 solitary place, removed far from the sight
 of his own species, and he will immedi-
 ately lament his solitude, feel within him-
 self a high esteem and love for his fellow-
 creatures, wish for the friendship of some,
 the happiness of all.

And here I cannot but observe, he will
 not then think that mankind were origi-
 nally in a state of war one with another;
 that envy, rage, and malice reigned in the
 purer ages of the world, or that it is natural
 for men to destroy one another, which some
 hardy writers have asserted, choosing, as it
 seems, to derive the characteristic of man
 from the most barbarous and selfish of the
 species, though to the disparagement of
 themselves; for no man would ascribe that
 quality or appetite to another, which he
 did not first feel in himself: so that in re-
 ality they stamp their own characters on
 mankind.

But

But to return. The benefits of a benevolent affection to the world are evident from the strenuous opposition it makes to every vice, and the calm state of mind it affords him that it dwells in. Thus Esau, though rough by nature, and provoked by Jacob, yet “ran to meet him, and embraced him, “and fell on his neck, and kissed him; “and they wept*.” It must indeed be difficult for the good man, who cherishes this kind affection, to envy another’s happiness, to hate his neighbour, or to pant for revenge: clemency, kindness, and humanity, are the inhabitants of his bosom; and where these reside, all the brutal passions are exiled. And thus, even in this, is all the law fulfilled, “thou shalt love thy “neighbour as thyself.”

Having considered the natural disposition or tendency of the uncorrupted man to love his neighbour, I now proceed to consider the

* Gen. xxxiii. 4:

more abstracted reasons for this duty, and thence to shew, how gross a crime habitual inhumanity certainly is.

To imitate God, in all things we are able, is not only most highly rational and just, but the sublimest of all moral duties: and as the whole direction of Providence is for the good of its creatures, so the communicating of happiness to the full extent of our power is the nearest approach that man can make to the Divinity. In the pathetic language of St. John, God is stiled love itself†: whence we may take leave to say, universal benevolence is the sacrifice he takes most pleasure in, and is what in a more peculiar manner indicates the child of God. In a word, he hath given us a disposition to benevolence, hath set before us, in the works of creation and providence, glorious examples of goodness and mercy; and, therefore, as we have powers and faculties to imi-

† John iv. 8.

tate them, that imitation becomes an indispensable duty.

Man, perhaps, was made an imperfect creature, that he might be a social creature; not being able to supply his own wants, or even relieve his own thoughts, he found himself obliged to seek a companion and a friend. All feeling the same wants and weaknesses, all repaired to the same centre. Hence intercourse, hence society; hence friendship and affection; and hence the chain of offices which holds the world together.

He who lives for himself only is no better than a beast of prey. He does his utmost to dissolve society, or crumble it into wretched individuals.

The circuit of his enjoyments is narrow as his own narrow heart. Instead of sharing with the benevolent in every other man's prosperity, every other man's prosperity is productive of misery to him. All reflected

U

pleasure

pleasure is lost upon him. In every eye that is turned towards him, he sees reflected his own malignity. And when he retires into himself, he finds, that in shutting his heart against benevolence, he has shut out all consolation. Whereas he who loves his neighbour as himself entertains no such fear, incurs no such danger, partakes of no such curse, but, on the contrary, opens his arms to the whole kind, as having been a friend to all, a foe to none.

Most men can judge rightly in their own cause, and declare how others should use them; it were to be wished then, that they would make this their rule, “to do to all, “as they would have all men do to them.”

An inordinate thirst after power, and the dishonest pursuit of riches, oftentimes absorb humanity. Ambition indeed is not only an innocent, but a laudable motive, when we incorporate the happiness of others with our own; but when it is all-designing
and

and selfish, it is a demon of the worst kind, or in the language of St. James, it is “earthly, sensual, devilish;” and never makes its appearance but as the adversary of mankind. Avarice, rapine, and luxury march in the same train: these disown all ties, trample on all connexions, consult only their own passions and appetites; and when ushered by authority, and armed with power, would license no appetites or passions but their own.

The duty of universal love or charity appears not only from the constitution of man, from the example of Almighty God, “whose tender mercies are over all his works,” and from the nature of society, but is in a peculiar manner enforced by Christ, who was pleased to make it the distinguishing characteristic of believers, when he said, “by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*.” He frequently insists

* John xiii. 35.

upon charity as one of the greatest duties,
 the end and fulfilling of the law. “ Though
 “ I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
 “ says St. Paul, and though I give my body
 “ to be burned, and have not charity, it
 “ profiteth me nothing. Whether there be
 “ prophecies, they shall fail ; whether
 “ there be tongues, they shall cease ; whe-
 “ ther there be knowlege, it shall vanish
 “ away ; but charity never faileth *.”

It is this that worketh righteousness and
 peace among men, and will fit us for
 heavenly pleasures in a future state, which
 no one can truly relish who has been a foe
 to benevolence in this ; he, not being quali-
 fied for the happiness of good men there,
 properly speaking, makes his own hell, and
 is a torment to himself. Then shall “ the
 “ things of this world be done away,”
 and he that placed his sole delight in them
 must of consequence be miserable. Faith

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3. 8.

shall have its end, for “ it is of things not
 “ seen. Then we shall know even as we
 “ also are known : and hope will be per-
 “ fect.” But love must remain, and be the
 practice and delight of the saints in heaven,
 as it should be of all men upon earth,
 especially of us Christians; who are bound
 to consider men, not merely as our fellow-
 creatures, but as brethren, and as members
 of one body united together under Christ
 our head ; which close relation is beauti-
 fully described by St. Paul in the following
 words : “ As we have many members in
 “ one body, and all members have not the
 “ same office ; so we, being many, are one
 “ body in Christ, and every one members
 “ one of another. Be ye therefore kindly
 “ affectioned one to another, with brotherly
 “ love, distributing to the necessity of saints,
 “ given to hospitality ; bless them which
 “ persecute you ; bless, and curse not ;
 “ rejoice with them that do rejoice, weep
 “ with them that weep ; be not over-

“ come of evil, but overcome evil with
 “ good *.”

This is true christianity : and would men consider it as they ought, would they consider how much humanity is enlarged, how much every virtue is enforced thereby, how much each doctrine tends to the promotion thereof, how light and easy the yoke is which it imposes, infidelity would be no more, or in the vicious man only, who would continue to entertain it as a flatterer that countenanced him in his vices.

To apply then what has been said to the present occasion, that we may become better men and better christians always, and at this particular time more thoroughly disposed to lend a compassionate ear, and stretch out a helping hand, to nature herself, in throws and agonies importuning us for relief and consolation. If we find ourselves inwardly

* Rom. xii. 4, &c.

prompted to the practice of universal charity; if the welfare of society requires it; if christianity, in a particular manner, inspires it; if to be on good terms with ourselves, to avoid the reproaches of our own hearts, which will be heard, let us resolve to be as deaf as we please; if to bespeak the favor of God, and the good-will of men, we are to lose no opportunity of succouring our fellow-creatures in all places and at all times, according to our abilities and their distresses, how great is the duty, how pressing the obligation of contributing to the relief of the destitute married woman in the hour of her calamity, and to the preservation of her innocent, helpless offspring!

The married woman, at such a crisis, and in such circumstances, was hardly ever before so meritorious an object of compassion and assistance. Every such mother is now a friend to the community, every child an acquisition. Marriage itself is become a

state of discouragement. Even the poor fly from it, because of the difficulties it exposes them to. And inducements are wanting among them almost to continue the succession of mankind. On the other hand, war consumes us; and if it were possible, according to the waste should be the growth.

In aid, therefore, of the motives already assigned, even policy itself might be urged. If any supplemental consideration could be necessary to an assembly like this, by their own benevolent inclinations brought together, their own reflections will be worth a thousand arguments. Fear, danger, expence, misery, are dreadful visitors. These surround the bed of the poor, when labor comes on, and only the hand of God can deliver from all.

The poor, such as are comparatively so, I mean, are, and must of necessity be, a large majority, not only in ours, but every other society.

But

But the good providence of God has so framed the mind, and has administered such a variety of palliatives, that this comparative degree, poverty, does not imply misery.

On the contrary, if we were to look for comparative happiness, there being no other in this transitory life, we should probably find it scattered most liberally among those whom the proud call the poor.

Not all the poor, therefore, come within the pale of this charity, the object would be immensurable, the care superfluous, but such only as unhappy situations or unavoidable calamities have deprived of the means of helping themselves; such as, till this excellent expedient for their relief was thought of and put in execution, have been overtaken by their pains in the streets, and who have disgraced not only this country of ours, but even humanity itself, by their unpitied sufferings.

That

That our hearts, therefore, can never be with more propriety softened than for such wretches as these, or our liberality more unexceptionably bestowed than in furnishing them with this occasional succour, need not be insisted upon any farther.

If, therefore, the manner of distributing your bounties is suitable to the purpose; if care is taken to extend your favors to none but the miserable; if preference is shewn to none but such as are most emphatically so; if they are received and treated with gentleness and goodness; if those who officiate do it not only with skill but alacrity; if proper food and medicine are duly and seasonably administered; if no religious or moral duty is neglected, and every care of every kind is taken both to preserve the child and re-establish the mother, our sensibility may be indulged without any reproach to our discretion.

By

By contribution, voluntary contribution, all is done : establishments are out of sight. Charity is the sole foundation of the building ; and if that should fail, even the very hope of the poor would fail with it.

But we profess ourselves to be Christians, and while Christianity remains, charity cannot fail.

“ What ye have done unto one of the
“ least of these my brethren, ye have
“ done unto me,” is one of the divine sayings of Christ himself*.

Can a Christian then refuse a boon thus pathetically required by the Lord who bought him ? Can those who are required to love, forbear to pity and relieve one another ?

All are brethren, though all are not alike furnished with the goods of this world ; and

* Matt. xxv. 40.

the highest prerogative of the rich is, that of the will and power they are intrusted with, of correcting the errors of fortune, and administering balm to the wounds of adversity.

According to our opulence should be our charity.

Let those, therefore, who have to spare, spare from their vanities and amusements here, to lay up treasure in heaven.

To those who have accustomed themselves to acts of humanity and generosity, this lesson will not be a hard one. The soft heart is apt to melt, the tender eye to flow, the liberal hand to communicate. Benevolence is the bloffom, beneficence is the fruit. By your fruit ye shall be known to be the disciples of Christ.

And could those who are made of more stubborn materials, or who by a habit of
selfish-

selfishness have laboured to fortify their hearts against all the approaches of compassion, be prevailed upon to try what the luxury of goodness is, they would have reason to be angry with themselves, for having so long withstood their own happiness.

The great reward of Christians, it is true, is not immediate; the kingdom of their master is in heaven; and the never-fading crowns of glory they are to wear cannot be given them till they are immortal; but there is a less reward in the gift of conscience, which is instantly bestowed upon every man that is merciful and good. Even our present happiness depends much upon our gratifying the more public, generous, and social qualities of the heart: and he, who has denied himself these benevolent gratifications, is almost as great an enemy to himself as he is to mankind. He is intitled to no pity from others, and will find no resources within himself to bear up
against

against the frowns of fortune, and the scorn of men; he will receive no comfort from others, have no peace within: for where there is no pity, there is no patience. Nor is this all; for he who is rich in this world's goods, but poor in good works, is the man who was found at the marriage of the king's son without a wedding garment *. Let us above all other things take care to be clad with charity †; for of these three, faith, hope, and charity, the greatest is charity ‡. In this world it will procure us what is most valuable in it, the praise of good men; and when we die, our works are said, in scripture phrase, to follow us ||, to bear good testimony in our favor, and to be our best friends in that state, where every act of mercy makes a place. This is the true use, the proper friendship of mammon or riches.

The surest way to obtain a blessing on ourselves will be, to confer a blessing upon

* Matt. xxii. 11. † Col. iii. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.
 || Revel. xiv. 13.

others. If we are infirm ourselves, we cannot but pity the infirmities of others; and if we do not also endeavour to relieve them, what right have we to expect mercy from God, who have refused it to a fellow-creature in distress? If, on the other hand, all is sun-shine and summer to us now, the winter of life will come, when the flowers of the spring will fade, when these gay scenes shall pass away like a tale that is told, or a short-lived vision; when, to use an eastern proverb, the remembrance of youth shall be a sigh, and conscience call upon us, in the hours of retirement, to examine our past conduct. Then it will appear of what inestimable value is the good we have done to others.

Perfection is not of human attainment; we have all our faults and foibles; in many things, says St. James, we all offend; and, therefore, should do our best to atone for those offences by acts of mercy and benevolence. As weak and imperfect beings we are
sure

sure to offend, and if we will not do good,
 what flattering hopes can we entertain of
 forgiveness? Though man is no longer in-
 nocent, he may however be beneficent;
 and beneficence is better than innocence;
 for he that does good deserves to be esteemed
 above him who only does no harm. Let us,
 therefore, lose no opportunity of doing good
 to others, not only for their sakes but for
 our own, and, particularly not the present,
 for of delay there is no end; “ and ye know
 “ not what hour your Lord doth come.
 “ Be ye ready, for in such an hour as you
 “ think not, the son of man cometh. Who
 “ then is a faithful and wise servant, whom
 “ his Lord hath made ruler over his house-
 “ hold to give them meat in due season?
 “ Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord,
 “ when he cometh, shall find so doing*.”
 Let us secure this blessing to ourselves,
 promised to all who shall watch the op-
 portunity of distributing to the necessities

* Matt. xxiv. 42, &c.

of others; and then whatever events arise in the world, we may safely rely upon the good providence of God, and with holy confidence address him in these words of our blessed Lord and Saviour, *thy will be done.*

of others; and then whatever events arise in the world, we may safely rely upon the good providence of God, and with holy confidence address him in these words of our blessed Lord and Saviour, thy will be

done.

And thus, my dear friends, I have

been thinking to illustrate to you

not only the truth of your

conscience, but also the

truth of your

conscience, and I have

been thinking to illustrate to you

not only the truth of your

conscience, but also the

truth of your

conscience, and I have

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S E R M O N XVIII.

J O H N xiii. 17.

*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye
do them.*

TH E practice of religion and virtue is essential to our perfection, and the natural, appointed, and effectual means of our happiness.

The knowlege of our duty is the result of diligent and impartial inquiry: real conviction is founded on evidence, produceth persuation, leads to acknowledgement and profession, and is completed by a series of correspondent actions, which introduce habit, facility, and pleasure.

Our obligation to act in conformity to moral and christian principles and virtues is derived from the dictates of natural conscience, and the instructions of the gospel.

Our Saviour had taught his disciples the great duties of humility and charity. He exhibited the practice of them in his own example, in condescending to perform the lowest office of hospitality in washing their feet*: an instructive admonition of their obligation to imitate him, whom they acknowledged to be their master and their Lord; who had taught them the doctrines, precepts, and motives of religion and virtue by his gospel, and illustrated them by a finished, all-accomplished pattern.

What he revealed and enjoined, he required his disciples to believe and practise, as necessary to approve themselves his genuine and faithful disciples, and to qualify them for the happiness to be enjoyed in his kingdom.

Our Lord, who assures his disciples, that happiness will be the certain effect of obedience to his commands, is possessed of

* John xiii. 5--16.

every quality to engage our attention, to establish our faith, and to animate our hopes.

He appeared invested with all the requisite credentials of a divine mission. His doctrine, life, miracles, death, and resurrection, are so many forcible evidences that his pretensions were just, and his capacity to instruct, purify, and to make us happy, indisputable.

His instructions are plain; his yoke is easy; his burthen light; his example powerful; his authority delightful, engaging, irresistible.

Jesus Christ was no respecter of persons. He went about doing good to all; healing the sick, and preaching the gospel of truth, and peace, and mercy, and forgiveness of sins to the Jews and the Samaritans*; commanding it to be preached to the Gentiles after his resurrection†.

* John iv. 42. † Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark. xvi. 15.

No guile was found in his lips, no malice in his heart, no error in his ways. His new and favourite precept was love. He commanded his followers, that they should hate no man, not even an enemy. And as he lived, he died, the greatest example of meekness, goodness, and mercy that ever blessed the world. He prayed even for those who crucified him, saying, “Father, for-
 “give them, for they know not what
 “they do *.”

When the Samaritans refused him common hospitality, and two of his disciples desired leave to command fire from heaven to destroy them, “he turned about and re-
 “buked them, and said, ye know not what
 “manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of
 “man is not come to destroy, but to save †.”

And on another occasion, “when a certain
 “lawyer stood up, and tempted him, say-
 “ing, Master, what shall I do to inherit

* Luke xxiii. 34. † Chap. ix. 55, 56.

“ eternal

“ eternal life? He said unto him, what is
 “ written in the law? how readest thou?
 “ And he answering said, thou shalt love
 “ the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
 “ and with all thy soul, and with all thy
 “ strength, and with all thy mind, and thy
 “ neighbour as thyself. And he said unto
 “ him, thou hast answered right: *this do,*
 “ *and thou shalt live.* But he, willing to
 “ justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who
 “ is my neighbour †?” The answer to this
 question is the well-known parable of the
 good Samaritan, which contains the most
 generous instruction in the finest relation
 ever told.

By this example Christ instructs us not
 to confine our compassionate regard to the
 narrow distinctions of place, of country, of
 sect, of party or persuasion. The benevolence
 of the good Samaritan subdued the preju-
 judices, which his countrymen entertained

† Luke x. 25—29.

against the people and religion of Judea. He looked upon the wounded traveller not as a Jew, but as an object in distress; passed not by him as the Priest and the Levite had done; but seeing him, was moved with compassion; poured wine and oil into his wounds; set him on his own beast; carried him to an inn, and promised to defray such expences as might attend his cure. “Which
 “now of these three, says our Saviour,
 “thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him
 “that fell among the thieves?” the Priest or the Levite, who saw him, who looked on him and passed by, or the Samaritan, who had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds? The lawyer replied, he that shewed mercy on him. “Then said Jesus unto him, go,
 “*and do thou likewise.*”

- This it is to love our neighbour: and hence it follows, that every man, of whatever place, whatever persuasion, is the Christian's neighbour.

Our

Our Saviour, in his incomparable sermon on the mount, shews, that his disciples then present were in a primary and peculiar sense “the light of the world,” designed to be the instruments of diffusing religious knowledge and virtue, by their doctrine and practice. In a secondary and subordinate sense it becomes the duty of every professed Christian, in every country and every age of the world.

Every Christian is to consider himself as a citizen of the world, and as related to the whole species. He is to render himself as useful to human kind as he can, and to divest himself of all prejudices, that he may be serviceable to all men. He is therefore compared to a city built upon a hill, which cannot be hid; and, as a luminary to the world, is required “to let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven.” He is placed in a point of view so conspicuous, that all the world will see

see and judge his actions, which are to be bright and diffusive, like the sun; to enlighten by knowlege, to warm by beneficence, and to produce such fruits, such good effects, that God may be glorified thereby *; may be known and praised for his infinite goodness and mercy.

What exalted ideas must this naturally excite in our minds of the doctrine and character of Jesus Christ! And nothing can be opposed to the representations of the one or the other, as contained in the accounts given by the Evangelists.

Who, that boasts a noble and generous mind, can refuse his assent to the doctrines of forgiveness of injuries and of universal benevolence? or can openly declare himself an enemy to him who was a friend to all?

* Matt. v. 16. John xv. 8. 1 Peter ii. 12.

All other men have offended: he only was without sin. Every other character has been mixed*: his alone was pure, and glorious, and perfect.

Such a pattern of meekness, modesty, goodness, piety, virtue, prudence, is nowhere else to be found. His patience and prudence were remarkably exemplified in his bearing with the infirmities and prejudices of his disciples; and, by washing of their feet, he shewed to their fullest satisfaction, that the most effectual method to gain his favor consists in meekness, humility, and benevolence.

In vain shall we look for such a character among the antient philosophers; the best of whom had, both in a moral and religious view, their doubts, perplexities,

* Vivitur non cum perfectis hominibus, plenèque sapientibus, sed cum iis in quibus præclarè agitur, si sunt simulachra virtutis. *Cic. de Officiis*, l. 1. § 15.
Edit. Lond. 1681.

and

and failings. Pathetic were the complaints they made of the want of sufficient authority to enforce their doctrines, and amend the world. The wisest of them all thought it reasonable to expect, that one would be sent with an extraordinary commission for this purpose *. And we know, from the writings

* The learned reader is entreated to consider, with due candor and attention, two passages from Plato, in Prop. vii. of the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, by Dr. S. Clarke,

To suggest, as some have done, that Socrates in the first of those passages [vid. Alcib. 2. sub finem.] speaks of himself, is by no means reasonable. 1. It is too vain and presumptuous to be said by any man of himself. 2. Plato would have complimented his master, if a compliment was here intended, by putting these words into the mouth of the disciple, or any other than Socrates. 3. Socrates was not entirely averse to all sorts of sacrifices; and having admitted the disciple's doubt concerning the acceptableness of sacrifices to God, it would never have followed, that offerings to the gods should be suspended till he, Socrates, came to resolve this perplexity. 4. Another reason may be drawn

writings of the antient heathens, without having recourse to Christian authors, that the eastern world expected such a one to come about the time of our Saviour's birth †. And when he came, it was with condescension and meekness, not insolence and pride; it was with mercy and forgiveness,

drawn from these words in the second passage, implying a wish or desire of some more infallible, secure, and solid basis for our conduct and support in this life; such as of some DIVINE WORD or revelation. *Εἰ μὴ τις δύναιτο ασφαλέςτερον καὶ ἀκινδυνότερον, ἐπὶ βεβαιότερα ὀχημάτων, ἢ ΛΟΓΟΥ ΘΕΙΟΥ τινός, διαπορευθῆναι.* Plato in *Phædone*, § 35. Is not this, to use the words of Dr. Clarke, “ a just and unanswerable reproach to all “ those who deny that there is any want or need of “ a revelation ?” p. 309.

† *Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur.* Suet. in *Vitâ Vespas.* § 4. *Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur.* Tacit. *Hist.* l. 5. c. 13. See *Second Argument in Defence of Christianity*, c. 5.

not

not revenge and punishment; it was “to
 “ save, and not to destroy;” to reclaim,
 and not to terrify; to “ fulfil the law,” and
 set the first example of his divine precepts.
 For this reason “ he took upon him the
 “ form of a servant, and was made in the
 “ likeness of men, and found in fashion as
 “ a man *.” In this state of voluntary
 abasement, he was in all things like unto
 us, “ yet without sin;” liable to the same
 wants, exposed to the same miseries; “ a
 “ man of sorrows, and acquainted with
 “ grief, wounded for our transgressions,
 “ and by wicked hands crucified and slain.
 “ But when he had made his soul an of-
 “ fering for sin, because he had poured it
 “ forth unto death, and was numbered
 “ with the transgressors, and bare the sins
 “ of many, and made intercession for
 “ them, therefore, he was to divide a por-
 “ tion with the great,” in the extent of his
 dominions; “ his seed was to abound” by

* Phil. ii. 7, 8,

the success and growth of Christianity; and
 “the pleasure of the Lord was to prosper
 “in his hands *.”

This prophecy of Isaiah, relating to the sufferings and triumphs of the Messiah, was literally accomplished in Jesus Christ, the true Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the world; who alone could “prolong his
 “days after his death,” and “divide the
 “spoil with the strong,” by having kings
 “become subject to his laws †.”

He came first as a messenger ‡ from heaven to publish the will of his Father, to deliver his laws, to invite to obedience, and to forgive rather than to punish.

* Isaiah liii. 1, &c.

† The reader is desired to examine the evidence arising from this prophecy in favor of christianity, as stated in the Second Argument, chap. vii.

‡ Mal. iii. 1. See Second Argument, chap. vi.

If he had appeared then unto judgment, his approach would have been with more terror to the world. He came not at that time to judge, but to prepare the world for future judgement, for his last appearance, when he is to come again with great glory to render to all according to their works.

As a man he came not to be feared, but to be loved; to serve rather than to rule; and to excite obedience and imitation in his followers, by shewing himself a pattern of the most perfect obedience to the will of God, in every act of a most innocent but painful life and ignominious death.

This his divine example is, in every instance, of as great use as the precept: for to know only is not to act, and precept requires example to inforce it.

If he had not appeared in the character and circumstances he did, though we might have enjoyed the one, we should have lost
all

all the force and efficacy of the other : and a very little experience may serve to shew, how far example will influence more than precept. But we have the benefit of both in the history of the life and death of him, who came into the world to save sinners, and “ who gave himself a ransom for all *.” And if we would be justified by him, when he is to pronounce a final sentence upon all, we must, in conformity to his example, be dutiful to God, and good to men ; do justly, love mercy, adhere to truth ; be gentle, patient, meek and candid ; tender hearted, forgiving one another ; compassionate and hospitable, benevolent and beneficent to all ; friends to our species, and parents to the poor ; we must never by extravagance reduce ourselves to misery and want ; nor, from avarice and insensibility of the calamities of others, shut our hands and hearts, our eyes and ears against their complaints and sufferings.

* 1 Tim. ii. 6.

Y

For

For if we are not merciful to others, how can we expect mercy from others?

“ If we love not our brother whom we
 “ have seen, how can we love God whom
 “ we have not seen ?” or how expect any
 favor from him, if we shew no favor to a
 fellow-creature in distress ; if we refuse to
 distribute to the necessity of saints, and are
 the authors of calamity to men, by an un-
 natural hardness of heart ?

He who has no mercy is no object of
 mercy ; and he who will not forgive must
 not expect to be forgiven.

Allowed and habitual resentment is a
 very dangerous disorder in the mind. It is
 absolutely forbidden by the christian law,
 which obliges us to forgive one another,
 and rests the expectation of forgiveness
 from God upon “ forgiving them that
 “ trespass against us*.”

* Matt. vi. 12. Mark xi. 25, 26.

Resentment is a torture to the mind; but it is very absurd to torment myself, because another may have done me some injury; for by this absurd conduct I promote his design more effectually than he could have done alone, and so add to the injury I have received, by punishing not my enemy but myself.

The pain and folly of this disorder of the mind should be the cure of it; but if that will not prevail, the example and commands of Christ our Saviour, which ascertain to us the terms of our salvation, are motives no real christian can resist.

Anger, as far as it renders us formidable to an adversary, and prevents injuries and insults, may be a necessary passion; but “the sun must not go down upon our wrath* :” when the body is to rest, this passion must subside.

* Ephes. iv. 26.

Resentment is a mean, ungenerous quality that will not be suffered to reside long in noble minds. It is a proof of a base and barbarous disposition, and as such is forbidden by Christ; from whose benevolence to men we should derive the most amiable and exalted ideas of his moral character, and of the greatness and divinity of his mind.

“ He made himself of no reputation †,
 “ and took upon him the form of a servant,
 “ vant,

† Or, as the original [ΕΚΕΙΝΩΣΕ] signifies, he emptied himself. The humility of Christ consisted in changing willingly a glorious for an inglorious condition. The glorious condition, which he was possessed of, was the form of God: the inglorious condition, to which he submitted, was the form of a servant. When the apostle therefore says, “ who, being in the form of God, took
 “ upon him the form of a servant,” he plainly intimates to us, that he obscured or laid aside the glory belonging to the form of God, when he took the form of a servant: the “ form of God,” therefore, expresses and contains all those glories which Christ willingly suffered to be hid in his state of humility. The very same thing is
 expressed

“vant, and was made in the likeness of
 “men; he humbled himself, and became
 “obedient unto death, even the death of
 “the cross †.”

expressed by the *equality with God* here mentioned; for it is said, that he did not eagerly insist to be equal with God: now certainly that which he did not insist to keep, and that which he emptied himself of, is one and the same thing.” Bp. Sherlock’s Disc. vol. iv. p. 26.

To the same purpose Bishop Chandler, in his sermon before the king on Christmas-day 1717, on JOHN i. 14. The Greek word implies, emptied or divested himself thereof. Here indeed was a mighty diminution from the form of God to the form of a servant, which all assume that are made in the likeness of men. And yet this was not all, “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself further, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” As surely, therefore, as he died, so surely he became true man; and he was as surely first in the form of God, as he was afterwards in the form of a man (you must understand both states of a reality of being, or both of an empty appearance) and greater humiliation cannot be conceived, than to descend from a state so high, to another so opposite.” p. 27.

† Philip. ii. 7, 8.

Y 3

This

This is more than can be said of any other philosopher, or any man in the world; and is a collateral, and, therefore, no inconsiderable proof of his mission.

The opposite quality of revenge was maintained by some of the greatest philosophers of antiquity; and so little is to be found, in their writings or their practice, of unbounded benevolence, that the religion of Jesus is sufficiently distinguished from all others, as it is the most universally benevolent*. How remarkable his precept

* Injustitiæ genera duo sunt; unum eorum, qui inferunt; alterum eorum, qui ab iis quibus infertur, si possint, non propulsant injuriam. Nam, qui injustè impetum in quempiam facit, aut irâ, aut aliquâ perturbatione incitatus, is quasi manus adferre videtur socio. Qui autem non defendit, nec obsistit, si potest, injuriæ, tam est in vitio, quam si parentes, aut amicos, aut patriam deferat. Incidunt sæpe tempora, cùm ea, quæ maximè videntur digna esse justo homine, eoque, quem virum bonum dicimus, commutantur, fiuntque contraria: ut reddere depositum, promissum facere; quæque per-
 tinent

precept to his disciples! “ Love your ene-
 “ mies, bless them that curse you, do good
 “ to them that hate you, and pray for
 “ them which despitefully use you and
 “ persecute you.”

But then this general benevolence, though
 consistent with, is not the immediate ob-
 ject of what Christ calls his “ new com-
 “ mandment;” for that was not designed
 so properly and expressly to recommend an
 unlimited and universal, as a partial and re-
 stricted benevolence among professed chris-
 tians. “ Love *one another as I have loved*
 “ *you*. We ought to lay down *our* lives for
 “ the *brethren*. This is my command-
 “ ment, that ye love *one another as I have*

tinent ad veritatem, et ad fidem, ea migrare interdum,
 et non fervare, sit justum.—Est enim ulciscendi et pu-
 niendi modus. Atque haud scio, an satis sit, eum, qui
 lacefferit, injuriæ suæ poenitere: ut et ipse ne quid tale
 posthac, et cæteri sint ad injuriam tardiores. *Cic. de*
Officiis, lib. 1. § 7. 10, 11.

“ loved *you*. Greater love hath no man than
 “ this, that a man lay down his life for
 “ his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do
 “ whatsoever I have commanded you.
 “ These things I command *you*, that ye
 “ love one another †.”

But this mark of distinction, and all that
 is said in favor of this new law, than which
 nothing is more frequently or more forcibly
 enjoined in the scriptures of the New Tes-
 tament, have not been able to subdue the
 prejudices and animosities of christian men.
 And it is unhappily true, that envy, preju-
 dice, party, private interest, and personal
 resentment, are too often destructive of
 christianity, and in some minds influence
 more than the gospel. But it is as much our
 duty to live, as to die in charity with all
 men; and more excellent and advantageous
 to shew it by our actions, than to make it
 known only by the last confession of our lips.

† John xiii. 34. 1 John iii. 16. John xv. 12, 13, 14. 17.

Take away the errors and misconduct of christians, and I believe the objections to christianity will appear very weak. I am sure the evidences for it are very strong. It is of great consequence to inquire into the truth of it; and if any refuse to come to the light because their deeds are evil, and they fear to be reproved, and will not repent and amend that they may be forgiven, the case of such infidels is most dangerous and unhappy. But “whosoever heareth the sayings of Christ, and doth them, is like unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock*.”

In a discourse concerning the actions of our Lord, and the christian’s duty to imitate them, it may not be improper to observe, that it is not doing justice to the miracles of Jesus to consider them merely as instances of power; they were also proofs of his love and mercy. The works which

* Matt. vii. 24.

he did, shewed the Father was with him; and he desired to be believed for his works sake; not the works of astonishment only, or such as might greatly amaze the beholders, but works of mercy as well as of power. The cleansing of impure lepers; the curing of demoniacs; the restoring of sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, strength to the paralytic, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb; “the healing of all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.”

And in this, as in every other thing, we are to imitate him, as far as we are able, and approve ourselves to be his followers by doing as he did. Though we cannot work miracles, we may be “labourers together under God*”, in doing good to men; we may raise the feeble and assist the poor; we may relieve the indigent and distressed, and be the means of restoring

* 1 Cor. iii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

health to the sick. And if we do not these things, “ if we have the goods of this world, and see our brother have need, “ and shut up our bowels of compassion “ from him, how dwelleth the love of “ God or man in us * ?” If we are neither influenced by the commands of Christ, nor by his example, what pretence have we to the name or character of christians? “ Thou “ believest that there is one God; thou “ doest well, says St. James: the devils “ also believe and tremble †. He shall have “ judgment without mercy, who hath “ shewed no mercy. What doth it profit, “ though a man say he hath faith, and have “ not works? Can faith save him? If a “ brother or sister be naked, and destitute “ of daily food, and one of you say unto “ them, depart in peace, be ye warmed “ and filled; notwithstanding ye give

* 1 John iii. 17.

† They who rest their hopes of salvation upon faith, without works, ought to take this passage of scripture into serious consideration.

“ them

“ them not those things, which are need-
 “ ful to the body, what doth it profit?—
 “ Faith without works is dead, being
 “ alone †. By your fruits ye shall be
 “ known; for men do not gather grapes
 “ of thorns, nor figs of thistles ‡.”

To pretend to believe in a scheme of benevolence, for such is the christian scheme, without any acts of mercy to support that pretence, is downright hypocrisy: but let us all here present approve ourselves, by our actions, faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus, knowing that “ not the hearers of the word,
 “ but the doers of the work shall be justified by him.”

Think on the more aggravated guilt, and much severer punishment of neglecting to perform the duties, which we acknowledge to be reasonable, and may justly expect will be beneficial.

† James ii. 13, &c.

‡ Matt. vii. 16.

“ He

“ He that knew his Lord’s will, and did
 “ it not, shall be beaten with many stripes;
 “ and the unprofitable servant shall be cast
 “ into utter darkness; there shall be weep-
 “ ing and gnashing of teeth *.”

That we may not incur the just displea-
 sure of our God and Father, the righteous
 judge of all the earth; that we may ap-
 prove ourselves good and faithful stewards
 of his grace †, let it appear by acts of com-
 passion, and mercy, and love for men, that
 we look upon ourselves as accountable to
 him for the use and application of his be-
 nefits; who, to promote benevolence in us,
 has allowed this reasonable claim of the
 distressed to be considered as a debt. To re-
 lieve the suffering and afflicted is to lend
 to the Lord ‡; and he that giveth to the
 poor is said to make God himself a debtor.
 In providing, therefore, for the relief and

* Luke xii. 47. Matt. xxv. 30. † 1 Peter iv. 10.

‡ Proverbs xix. 17.

support of those who are admitted into this well-regulated infirmary, we may be truly said to serve our God, our country, and ourselves.

The happiness of the world arises not from a continual, miraculous interposition of divine power, but from the ministry of subordinate agents ; and, therefore, the wants and miseries of men are to be redressed by human means, though the motives are divine.

If some are rich, others must be poor ; and, therefore, the former should consider themselves as instruments in the hands of Providence to relieve the latter: they should secure a blessing to themselves by blessing others ; and not on themselves only, but on their posterity also, will God confer the reward. “ For to them, who love him and
 “ keep his commandments, will he shew
 “ mercy, even to a thousand generations
 “ to come *.” And when this world is at

* Exod. xx. 6.

an end ; “ when the Son of Man shall come
 “ in his glory, and all the holy angels with
 “ him, then shall he sit upon the throne
 “ of his glory, and before him shall be
 “ gathered all nations ; and he shall sepa-
 “ rate the sheep from the goats, the good
 “ from the bad ; those who gave him meat
 “ when he was hungry, drink when he
 “ thirsted, and who were hospitable to the
 “ stranger, who clothed the naked, and
 “ visited the sick and the prisoner,” from
 those cruel, merciless, and hardened sin-
 ners, who gave no meat to him who
 hungred, no drink to the thirsty ; but shut
 their inhospitable doors against the stranger,
 and refused to visit, and relieve the sick,
 and the prisoner. To the first our Saviour
 says, “ come ye blessed of my Father, in-
 “ herit the kingdom prepared for you from
 “ the foundation of the world :” to the
 latter, “ depart from me, ye cursed, into
 “ everlasting fire prepared for the devil
 “ and his angels *.”

* Matt. xxv. 31, &c.

This duty of relieving the distressed is strongly recommended to christians by their great Master, who, seated upon his awful tribunal at the last day, will make this declaration: what “ ye have done unto one
“ of the least of these my brethren, ye have
“ done unto me.”

Here Christ puts himself in the place of those who are in want of liberty, and health, and food, and raiment: for such he asks relief, as for himself, and assures you, that “ inasmuch as ye have done it unto
“ one of the least of these, ye have done
“ it unto him.”

What christian, therefore, can refuse that relief, which is asked by Jesus Christ for every needy, sick, imprisoned, and afflicted brother, as for himself?

When your Lord and Saviour condescends to ask a bounty for those poor and distressed objects, for whom the pious, worthy, honour-

able conductors of this excellent charity are petitioners also in his name, it is not to be imagined that you will turn your back upon him who bought you *; the least of whose rewards is incomparably preferable to the greatest titles and possessions in this vain world.

The mercy of our Father which is in heaven extends, indeed, over all his works; but if we will not follow this great example, and become the patrons of the sick and wounded, who are needy, naked, deserted, “ready to perish,” without help, and without friends, God and angels, and good men alone excepted; if we shut up our hearts against compassion, and all those tender sensations, which the calamities of others naturally excite in men, who are not hardened by cruelty, and by “covetousness, which is idolatry;” if, we turn away our eyes from the wants and miseries

* i Cor. vii. 23.

of our fellow-creatures; if we are deaf to loud calls for mercy; if we will not hear the sighs and groans, nor be affected with the tears and complaints of the wretched and unhappy, we are not men but monsters; we cease to be social or religious, and become more savage than many of the brute creation, who are often found to sympathize with men, and to have those feelings for them which they sometimes want for one another.

This insensibility is not to be accounted for from human nature, as it is human, nor from religion, nor from polity. It is the reverse of humanity, and of piety, and of all that is social. It is ingratitude to God, and ill-will towards men. It is a denial of the wants and distresses of the poor, or of our capacity to relieve them. It is to use them in a far different manner than we should wish to be used, if in their unhappy circumstances: and let our present prosperity appear to be ever so great, these flattering

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ing scenes may swiftly change, and those cry aloud for mercy on themselves, who never have been merciful to others.

But if they escape the bitterness of affliction here, what have they to expect hereafter from the Father of mercies, in whose “house are many mansions,” where they who have been merciful are to dwell! for there every act of mercy makes a place; and, consequently, he who has shewn no mercy can have no place there.

Dare we presume to address our Father in heaven, saying, Father, have mercy on us, and say to a poor, wounded brother, be gone, I will not contribute to your relief! What foundation, what pretence can we have to hope for mercy, but that we have shewn mercy! How can we sue for mercy at the throne of grace, or ask that of God, which with hard hearts we have denied to men!

If God has blessed you with the means of relieving others, he certainly expects a pro-

portionate relief from you ; and the time will come, when the neglect of any opportunity offered of doing good to man will be painful to the mind, and every act of mercy be recollected with transport.

Acts of mercy are the friends you are to make of the unrighteous mammon, or riches ; and such friends they are, as when ye fail and die, will introduce you into everlasting habitations.

They are as angels to conduct you through the dark and awful passage of death into regions of light and glory ; for they lead you to the gates of heaven, and are your witnesses and advocates at the great trial in the day of judgment ; and, having procured sentence in your favor, place you for ever in the glorious mansions of the house of God.

The authority and precepts of Christ constitute the rule of our duty, and his promises are the sure foundation of our hope. While
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his commands are urged to enforce our obedience, the prospects of his favor support and animate our expectations. At his first appearance he fully declared our obligation, and he has assured us, that when he comes, he will bring his rewards with him *. On this important, decisive day, all the glorious promises he hath given shall be completely fulfilled; for “ he shall come to be glorified
 “ in his saints, and to be admired in all them
 “ who believe †.”

Could the ordinary distresses of the inferior world be made to pass in one view before you, it would be a scene of too much horror to behold. Whatever gay notions the pursuers of ease and pleasure may entertain of this world, it is certain, that a great part of mankind die of want, and “ in bitterness of soul ‡.” If we do all in our power to rescue others from the former, we shall be most likely to exempt ourselves from the latter.

* Rev. xxii. 12. † 2 Thes. i. 10. ‡ Job xxi. 25.

They who have lost the feelings of humanity, are grown callous and utterly insensible of the calamities of their species, are no longer men. Pity and compassion are qualities peculiar to human kind; but when pride, ambition, avarice subdue them, when men cease to be social by becoming entirely selfish, they cease to be human.

Wherever there is any excellency it disdains to be hidden; if a man is generous it will appear in his conduct, and the hand will follow the heart as naturally as the blossom is succeeded by the fruit. The sweetest blossom is tenderness of heart, and the fairest fruit is charity. The beauties of the body will decay, the beauties of the mind are everlasting. The surest way to be beloved is to do good, and heaven is your reward.

Generous acts are like sunshine to the heart, which is warmed, and cheered, and dilated by goodness and humanity; and, on
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the contrary, is made to contract and wither by every fordid, selfish act.

To those who have accustomed themselves to acts of generosity very little need to be said to excite their benevolence, on the present occasion : and let those, who have not accustomed themselves to deeds of charity, make a trial of their hearts now, and it is not to be doubted, from the natural make and disposition of the human frame, but that the mind will look upon itself as gratified by this sacrifice to benevolence.

Of the great utility of this charity, for which I am an humble but earnest suitor, the experience of many years is no inconsiderable proof. It was the first of the kind established in this kingdom ; and has been very fruitful, as far as example can be said to be so, in producing others.

As it depends, in a great measure, upon voluntary contributions, care will be taken
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to conduct it in such a manner as will always recommend it to your bounty. And, give me leave to add, it is a noble instance of gratitude to God, and good-will towards men, to contribute to the immediate relief of the sick and wounded, by the best, the ablest, and the most salutary applications to their minds and bodies; instructing, healing, lodging, clothing, feeding them. Nothing is required for their admission but that they are objects of distress. If they are in want of clothing, this and every other want is supplied. If their case is desperate, and admits of a relief only, and not of a perfect cure, they are taken care of till they die, and are buried at the expence of the charity: a charity by which many thousands have been saved to their country and their families; and more than four hundred in one year only admitted on sudden accidents into this hospital, without any recommendation. This charitable house is open at all hours, day and night, for the reception of proper objects.

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If the numbers of distressed objects continually increase, let a generous disposition to relieve the distressed increase also, and that in adequate proportion to the increase of your abilities. And as neither elegance nor convenience can be procured but by the labor of the poor, it will be equally cruel and unjust not to enable the governors of this excellent foundation to relieve them from complaints, frequently contracted by their labor for the service of the rich.

Let not, therefore, this present opportunity escape you of doing so much good in such an unexceptionable way, as may shew that ye are christians indeed, and have a real regard not only for the present state of this infirmary, but the future peace and happiness of your own minds.

Christians should not be less charitable to Christians, than the good Samaritan was to the Jew. We are to consider ourselves as one body, and as “members one of another ;”

“other;” and “no man hateth his own flesh,
 “but nourisheth and cherisheth it. Christ
 “himself is the vine, we are the branches*.”

Such are the images by which the intimate
 union of christians is represented by our
 Saviour and his apostle Paul.

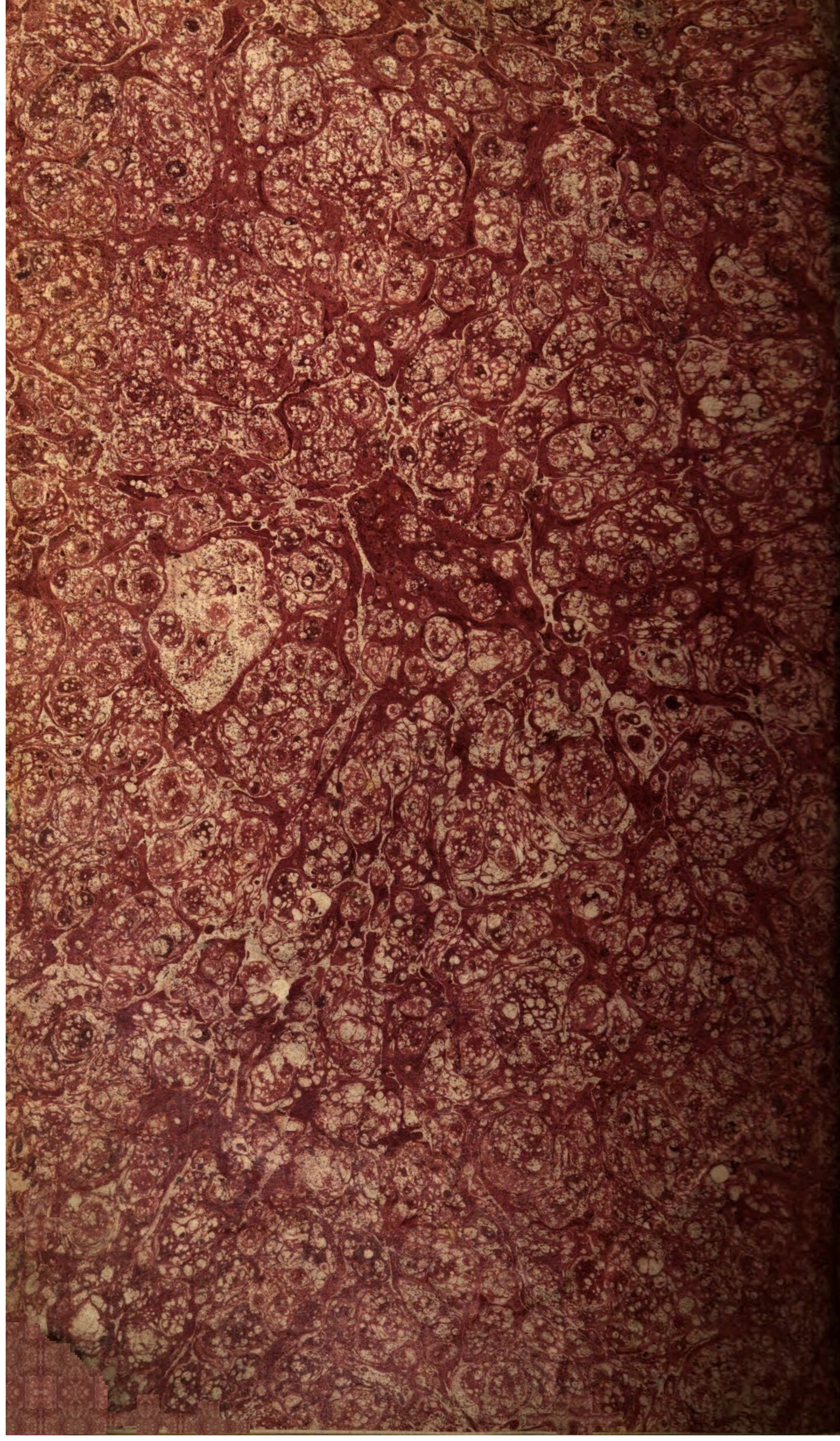
He, therefore, who does not love his
 neighbour as himself, and is not determined
 to do to others as he, under like circum-
 stances, would be done unto, is very far from
 being a christian. But if God himself hath
 set the first and great example of goodness
 and mercy in the creation, preservation,
 and redemption of the world; if Christ has
 made love his new and favourite command;
 if his law, and his promises, and his ex-
 ample, have any power to influence; if
 religion, humanity, compassion, mercy,
 heaven, can persuade, *go and do thou
 likewise.*

* Rom. xii. 4, 5. 8. Ephes. v. 29. John xv. 5.

E R R A T A.

Page 135, line 3, for *his* read *their*.

224, ult. after *apostles* place a *semicolon*.





Sharpe, Gregory

Sermons on various subjects

London 1772

Hom. 1477 d

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